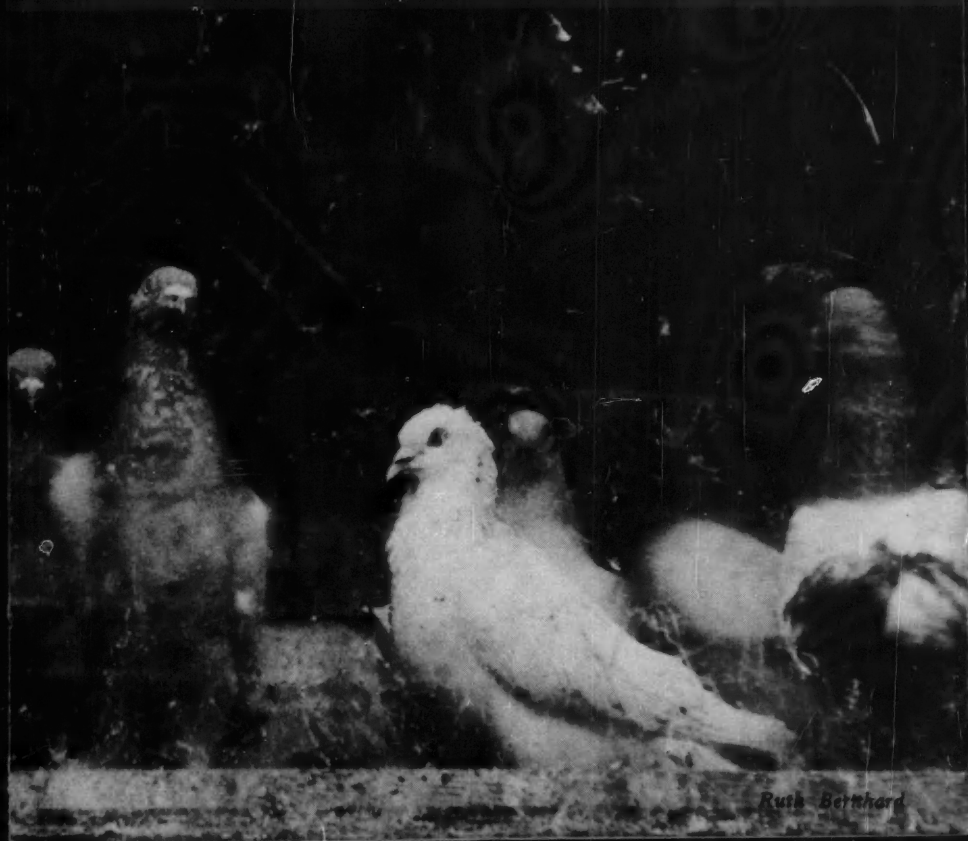


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"The Pathetic Prognosis,"
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Jean Renoir with a student actress at a rehearsal of
his new play, *Carola*.

—photo by Bill Gamble

Interviewer: *Gideon Bachmann*

A CONVERSATION WITH JEAN RENOIR

Bachmann: This is an interview with Jean Renoir, recorded in New York on August 23, 1956 at the Royalton Hotel.

Perhaps the best way to start is to ask you to mention some of the films that you have done.

Renoir: Well there are so many that it is difficult to know where to start. But let's say that my first picture—my first important picture—was an adaptation of *Nana*, the novel by Zola. And I made many silent pictures. You know, I made even very expensive ones with plenty of people and battles and big sets. I made such expensive pictures that when sound arrived people didn't trust me. They thought I would be a too expensive director. And it was very difficult for me to start a new career with sound. I did it by suggesting a story which could be shot in one week—a feature film, a one-hour-and-a-half film—that was taken from a stage play by Fedot. You know Fedot. A very famous French comedy-writer. He died about fifty years ago. Well, I don't know how to translate the name of this picture in English. It is about the kid—a child—baby who needs to be helped a little bit—needs medicine. Well, it was

a very French—Gallic picture. I shot it in six days and I did the cutting in six days and three weeks later the picture was shown in many theaters in Paris and it made plenty of money and I was considered as a good talking director.

Bachmann: What was the name of the film in French?

Renoir: *On Purge Bébé*. My first important talking picture was *La Chienne*. It was remade here in this country under the name *Scarlet Street*. *La Chienne* was a very difficult picture. As a matter of fact *La Chienne* was the first picture of this new style people call "realist." I mean, the first *talking-picture* because before me Feyder had done *Thérèse Raquin*. And some of my friends among the directors had done a few realistic silent pictures. But this was the first talking picture of this sort, and it was very difficultly accepted. Number one, the producer who asked me to do the picture—let's say the producer I convinced that I could do the picture because I had done *On Purge Bébé* in six days—thought that I was shooting a comedy again. And it is a very sad story, very gloomy, and when he saw the picture he was very disappointed and wanted to recut the picture—we had horrible fights. Finally I won. The picture was edited the way I wanted, and was shown first in a provincial town: in Nancy. The result was that the next day the picture was removed from the screen. They had to interrupt the presentation because the audience couldn't accept such realistic story in a talking picture. Strangely enough they did accept them in silent films but when people in such sad, gloomy situations were *talking* they couldn't accept it.

Well, it was looking very much like a catastrophe when a friend of mine who owned a movie theater in Biarritz. And this man took my picture. And the idea of a certain kind of unusual poster to be put all over the town of Biarritz. The poster explained to people that the picture was horrible, impossible, and please don't bring your children. Well, the theatre was packed for many weeks and a big theatre in Paris decided to take the picture to show it, and it was really the first movie which was shown during three or four months in the same theatre, who had a long first run.

Bachmann: Perhaps your earliest film that American audiences still remember would be *Grande Illusion*. When was that made?

Renoir: 1936. It was a little bit an answer to growing world

nationalism. It was an appeal to peace. Let's say a very useless one, since you know what happened since.

Bachmann: That was with Eric Von Stroheim.

Renoir: Eric Von Stroheim, Pierre Fresnay and Jean Gabin. Jean Gabin was really the center of the picture.

Bachmann: Is he one of your favorite actors?

Renoir: Yes. He's wonderful. He was born for the movies.

Bachmann: What other films have you made with Gabin?

Renoir: *La Bête Humaine*—the *Human Beast*. And *Les Bas-Fonds*, with him and Louis Jouvet. And now a comedy, *French Can-Can*. When we found ourselves in front of a camera after fifteen years, we were very happy to work again. He was still the same wonderful actor.

Bachmann: You did make some films in this country didn't you?

Renoir: Oh, I made many films. I arrived in this country the last day of the year 1940. December 31st. Just coming from a very dark Europe and arriving eve of New Year in New York with the whole town full of joy and lights, and it was wonderful. A great contrast. And I went to Hollywood. I started with Twentieth Century-Fox, convinced the company to send me to Georgia to make a picture. They were very much surprised and asked me why to have such big studios if you want to go to Georgia. "We build such studios to shoot anything here, including Georgia!" Well, I insisted. Darryl Zanuck was very nice. He understood what I wanted and he sent me to Georgia, where I shot *Swamp Water*. That was my first American picture.

Bachmann: Who were the stars in that?

Renoir: Well, no stars—which was also a surprise at Twentieth Century-Fox. I was very firm about it. I insisted for taking a girl who was a stock girl. They didn't even know that she was working at the studio. And the boy was also a stock boy. The boy was Dana Andrews and the girl was Anne Baxter.

Bachmann: I would like to ask you for your opinion on the influence of European productions on the recent change in the type of film we turn out in this country.

Renoir: Well, number one. I believe very firmly that the spirit of the whole world is changing slowly but very surely, and that it's not a question of America or France or Europe. I believe human

beings are discovering new things around them and are considering life with different eyes. Now the change happened sooner in Europe because of certain facts: Because of the war and the occupation, the occupation and the ordeal—let's say, no food—the suffering was more over there and probably it helped film-makers to understand certain problems sooner than here. But I believe that the spirit is exactly the same. Now what we see on the American screen is very much like what we saw ten years ago on Italian screens or French screens. It seems that the pictures all belong to this "neo-realistic" school. I believe it is just a new way for the world to consider life and that's all. Now I don't even believe that it means more—let's say, it's the safest approach to reality. Reality has nothing to do with that *style*. The makeup of an actor has nothing to do with the inner reality. It's just more importance given to the outside reality. Sometimes importance given to outside reality is very handy. By understanding outside reality we understand inner reality maybe a little more, a little better. But I don't believe that this new style which is so obvious in American pictures and which started, let's say mostly in Italy in 1945 . . . well, this new style, I believe, helped the picture business to get rid of some old routines, but I don't believe that it means necessarily that pictures shot with this style are more real or are closer to truth.

Bachmann: Well, I suppose it depends what you call "real" and "realism." I've discussed this with Otto Preminger and Stanley Kramer, who have both been identified in a sense with this new type of film being made here. And the word "truth" always comes up in the end. Therefore I was interested in what you said—that style does not add a dimension to truth itself.

Your style always showed more "realism"—or perhaps it was more directly involved with the small things that make up the big things. Perhaps in that sense you might be able to tell me what in you it is that drives you, or that *did* drive you, to really explore this realism much before the Italians came out with it in such a large way.

Renoir: Well, as a matter of fact, the reason why I decided to try to catch this outside reality—which we call realism—was a little bit a reaction against the picture of the world. When I started in the picture business the very successful pictures were American

ones, which were absolutely sugar-coated at the time. And I must say I loved them, I admired them, and I still admire them. For me the Hollywood period before the talkies is maybe the greatest period in film history. It was absolutely wonderful. And maybe it was sugar-coated but I still maintain that the Hollywood pictures of this time explained to the whole world the American life as it is really—more than anything else, but maybe one thing, the jazz. The jazz music and the pictures of this time were probably the two most important artistic realizations of the period.

Now myself, I was extremely impressed by those pictures. But I knew that as a Frenchman working in Paris I had to do something else if I wanted to be sincere. And I adopted the realistic style only because I was trying to copy what I used to see around me, and to copy it very—I should say—almost clumsily, almost childishly. My point of view was that a camera after all is a camera, it is photography. If you want to distort reality, or, let's say, to *stylize* reality, well, you have to use another way; but not a camera. Now I'm more ambitious, I must say.

I started to be more ambitious with *The River*. *The River*, I shot it in India. And India brought me the revelation of a world which by itself encouraged stylization. There is stylization in India in the street, in the movements of the women, in the colors, anywhere. And India helped me to get rid of a certain outside realism, which I still trust, which I still admire, but I now believe that any style can be used on the screen, and to be very frank in every new picture I am trying to adopt a new style and to forget everything I did before. I am trying to know more about this world. I don't know very much but the little I know, I like to express it, and I like to try not to lie to myself. That's the main thing. I'm no longer interested in the "outside" style of my pictures.

Bachmann: Do you feel then that the realism, or better, naturalism of the Italian cinema was just a naive way of presenting an image.

Renoir: I'm convinced that the Italian neo-realism was just the product of naivete, and may I say, if it wasn't it wouldn't be great, because I don't believe that when things are done on purpose they are any more good.

Bachmann: Well, this influence of the Italian style on America

as a naive influence will not, I think, be particularly appreciated by all the people over here who are trying to "implement the lesson of the Italians," and who probably think that by introducing the same style into American films they have achieved something great. Do you feel, then, that this is a development in the negative?

Renoir: I don't know. Because the American spirit—I mean the spirit of the nation—is also changing. Let's say that after a hundred years of romanticism people want to get rid of romanticism, who are living upon a certain type of lies since a hundred years ago, lies which are sugar-coating all the facts of life. I don't say it's bad, I just say it's a style and the style is going to change. For instance, many people are wondering about existentialism and they ask: Why existentialism? Well, the answer is very simple. It's just because people want to remove the different rosy, pinky curtains which are hiding the landscape; they want to see the landscape as it is. And you have such a revolution in the history of art about every hundred years. New people arrive who tell the audience: "My dear friends, do you know what you saw up to now on the stage was just a routine, was just a style. Now I'm going to show you life as it is" And they really succeed for only a few years because the *new* style, the *new* reality becomes a style and a routine very quickly.

Bachmann: What you're really saying is that "style" is sort of putting-in-a-tin-can something that was once new and is now old.

Renoir: That's it. Now if the author is talented that doesn't matter. Let's take, for instance, a comedy by Shakespeare. Well, Shakespeare very humbly did follow the style of his time. And let's suppose that today you take *As You Like It*. You give it a different name, you call it *Two Lovers*, for instance; and you explain to the audience that it was written by a young, unknown writer born in California. Everybody would say: "Well, that's very nice but childish, you know. It's absolutely childish! Unbelievable! And false! Look—the way they are dressed, the way they walk!" Still Shakespeare's play is a great thing, it's an enormous work because the reality has nothing to do with the exterior appearances. The reality is inner. Let's say that this outside reality—which we call "realism" or "naturalism"—anything you want—may be a *help*, but is not *important*. What is more important, it is the knowledge of life, which should be the fact of a good author.

Bachmann: Before, when you talked about India, you said that style is everywhere, in the women in the streets and everything that you see, and this gave you a new idea and a new approach towards looking for better things to do in films. But after that, you said that the Americans are trying to emulate the Europeans, and that this in a sense is only a following of something which *was* new but has already become old.

Now where does the fine dividing line lie that makes something into a work of art which *remains*—like Shakespeare, or like “style” in India—as compared to something which is similarly made but which is only *copying*, and which will be forgotten tomorrow?

Renoir: I believe that there is no rule. There is no regulation. There is no recipe. I think that in Hollywood, where there are wonderful directors, where the directors are wonderful if they know about life. Now maybe they know about life according to their own angle. But we are all the same. We know only a bit of life. You know, our profession—let’s say our tools, they’re a bit like glasses. And we have to see through those glasses and we don’t see through other glasses but only through *our* glasses, that’s all. Now sometimes, to add to our glasses the features which were already used by people using different glasses, helps us. Well fine—why not? I don’t see any reason in Hollywood not to adopt some Italian methods. Why not? If it helps. And maybe it does.

You know, it is the same thing—let’s say—with any great painter. For instance, when my father was a young man and started to paint, his god—the man he admired the most—was Diaze. Diaze is perfectly unknown today and probably many people would be surprised to think that my father wanted only to become another Diaze. But this ambition helped him, and his personality being stronger, he did overcome the desire to imitate Diaze. He very sincerely was sure that he was just an imitator of Diaze when he was just Renoir.

It is the same thing with the greatest forms of art, which are primitive arts. If we take any civilization; say, the modern civilization starting with the Renaissance; or the middle-age civilization starting with the end of the Roman Empire—the best works are the first ones, the early ones. For one reason. People had no the-

ories: they were just trying to copy reality, and the stylization came from the fact that they *couldn't* copy reality. But this stylization was in spite of themselves. And that was great.

Another thing we need in art is naïveté. You know what terrifies me in the movies today? The fact that we have to know too many things; that kills our naïveté. We can no more be children. And I believe that to be a great artist you must first of all be a child.

Bachmann: There comes the question, then, of who fits your glasses? Your own personal development creates that personal approach, which you call being a child. "Style" is imposed by your own background, and its influence makes your work into great art if it relates to your surroundings in such a way as to create a unity.

Renoir: True. On the other hand, if you do it with the idea that only your own expression is important, well, you do nothing. You must humbly believe that you have to copy the world as it is around you and if your own personality is strong enough, well, the world you paint will disappear and yourself will appear.

Bachmann: And yourself in relationship to the world.

Renoir: Absolutely.

Bachmann: And that would be the thing that makes it into a lasting work of art: it would be acceptable to so many other people because of this relationship.

Renoir: And also because you help the other people who have no time to do it. I don't say that we artists are more intelligent or that we know more than the other ones. Not at all. It's just that we have more time. We've dedicated our time to the search for truth. All the other ones, after all, have to work to make a living by being bankers, or state employees, or railroad engineers. Well, we have more time to discover the truth, and when we discover a little bit of truth, well, we open a new window and show a new landscape, and people are thankful to us for that. They say: "But that's truth!" And it's even more true, because the landscape we discover, the landscape we show, is a landscape they already *know*. But they never saw it that way before.

You know the line, the beautiful statement by Oscar Wilde about the painter, Turner, who painted so many foggy landscapes of London? Wilde said that before Turner there was no fog in London. And, you know, it is true. Because you take any bit of English

literature before Turner: nobody talks about the fog. You have no fog in Shakespeare, no fog in Ben Johnson. They never talk about it. After Turner, in any English novel there is fog. Well, we are thankful to Turner to have discovered something which was obvious, but none of us could see it. It is that there is fog in London. Don't you think that's wonderful?

That's our big task. That's what makes our profession wonderful. It is just to discover the obvious reality. But the obvious reality is in front of our eyes and we don't see it unless we dedicate our lives to discover it.

I believe that human beings are very strongly related with the country where they belong, or the country where they are living or the habits, food, let's say, the prejudice, they are living in. For instance, I was talking about India. There is no doubt that if I found such a stylization in the daily living of Indian people it is probably because the country itself is *naturally* stylized. With the camera you have to take what nature gives you. And in India, mostly in Bengal, instead of a thousand shades of color you have maybe five or ten and that makes it very easy to have a beautiful color shot because a good, beautiful shot in color, I think, is possible only if the colors are extremely simplified and few. Let's say that nature, being stylized, the people living within this nature are stylized. Now here in a country, in America—we are an enormous country, and a part of this country has a Southern climate. Let's say that even a big part of the country in summer has a tropical climate. Still, our civilization all over the country is a Northern civilization. We may say, without exaggeration, that English habits, English tradition, or the German habits, or the Scandinavian habits, are more important, are more easy to detect in America than the Latin habits. Well, but it's going to change because there is a kind of law all over the story of humanity. It is that the Northern people are always the winners with armies—militarily—but the Southern people are always the practical winners at the end. And very slowly we are going to see in America the Southern spirit coming up and winning at the end.

Now to me the definition of Northern and Southern spirit is very difficult, but maybe there is something which can help us to understand what I mean. I believe that in Northern countries

people like to hide reality a little more. Much more. I think that in a Northern country a house is more painted, more decorated than in the South. I believe that in a Northern country, also, there is more—let's say—formality in human relations. I don't say that's bad or good. Just a fact. And let's say that the sugar-coated romanticism came from the North. It is basically a German invention, which was adopted enthusiastically by the British and then by the French, but it was born in a Northern country. In a Southern country they believe more in what they say, as it is. Now let's take, for instance, a symbol, a symbolic story.

Let's call it the story of the leg of lamb. You go to a butcher today. No, let's go back to the old days in a Latin country. Let's say Naples in 1700. And we want to buy a leg of lamb and we go to a butcher. This butcher will probably be established in a small store, not too clean. A lot of flies. And he's probably killing the animals in the backyard, and you can see the animals being killed, and his apron is full of blood. You feel like being the witness of a murder and you buy your leg of lamb knowing that to have this leg of lamb an animal had to be killed, had to suffer. In other words the idea of sacrifice is connected with your pleasure when you eat the leg of lamb and to me that's very important. It is the basic idea of Christianity. Nothing without sacrifice. Without a sacrifice you cannot reach greatness.

Now the Northern people are trying to suppress, to remove the sacrifice from daily life. We are trying to reach greatness by reading books, in houses with no cold in winter and no heat in summer. We are trying, you know, to remove the distances. We are trying to make life sugar-coated, easy. But there is a revenge, and the Southern spirit is coming up. And I believe that this kind of revival of the middle-age ideas—which to me are wonderful—is just what is influencing Hollywood now. The neo-realism in the Hollywood pictures is just the fact that we now acknowledge a certain reality which belongs to the Southern spirit, the future winner.

Bachmann: In other words, the sanitary, super-market-leg-of-lamb wrapped in cellophane is on the way out, and we're going to slaughter our movies in the backyard.

Renoir: That's it. Exactly what I mean.

Bachmann: Do you feel that this development is also apparent

in Europe and that that's perhaps one of the reasons why "real" pictures have been made in Italy and "Victorian" pictures in England?

Renoir: I think it is apparent all over the western world. Of course I don't know in the Arab world or in the Indian world or the Chinese world . . . they are very different from our world. But let's talk about the civilizations that I know. I think that in our western civilization we are probably going to have a terrific reaction against all the nice lies of the last century.

Bachmann: Well, the reaction against lies of the last century has really been going on for over fifty years. Not so much in movies but in painting and other arts. And somehow people seem to take the lies of the last century as sort of a scapegoat to hide their own shortcomings and too often you find that young people who are "revolutionaries" or who have a torch-carrying drive in their adolescent years say: "Well, we have to change the old ways." Whereas, really, in terms of creating something new the way you mention before, and creating a new dimension (which was really obvious but not acknowledged) very little is being done. Very little that is creatively new, and not just a reaction, and a destructive one, at that, against the old.

Renoir: Well, that I don't know. The problem is also economic. But to go back to what you said—that this movement is going on since, let's say, half of the last century. That's true. But it was limited to literature, to painting, to a certain type of art which was, or exists, only in the life of a limited number of persons. When we talk about the movies and about public spirit, that means the entire world is going to be shaken by this revolution. No revolution is done in one day. Many people believe, for instance, that the French Revolution just meant—let's say Bastille Day. Well, the French Revolution started a hundred years before and is still not ended, it is still going on. And I believe that the entire romantic movement, which started in the middle of the romantic century, is going on now, but we are probably very close to the end of romanticism.

Bachmann: Do you think there's a consciousness about this development in this country? I personally have a feeling that Europeans are conscious of this change, whereas over here we do a lot

of wonderful things without really being cognizant ourselves of what is happening. Do you think that's good or bad?

Renoir: I think it's good. I think this unconsciousness helps the Americans to do great things. I believe that when you start to be conscious it's a weakness. Now with their unconsciousness the Americans gave to the world—to me—the two most important recent forms of art. That was the jazz, in music, it is a great revolution—and the early Hollywood movies, which to me are still the top of movie-making.

Bachmann: One question I would like to ask you is about movie-making itself. I would be interested in your ideas about the relative importance of such things as style versus theme, of the actor's role versus the role of the director. Things of that kind.

Renoir: Well, all those things are extremely important, of course. But my point of view changed very much since I started to make pictures more than thirty years ago. In the beginning I was absolutely convinced that picture-making was for me the only way of expression. This idea was probably due to the importance of technique at the time. The technique being very uncertain, we had to take care of it a great deal. We had to know about the camera, about set painting, about cutting, I don't say sound—the pictures were silent—but we had to know about the music which was going to go with the picture. It was a little more an individual job. And I could compare the making of a picture in the early days to the writing of a book, where the writer is alone with his typewriter and a piece of paper. Because of that, the idea of expressing myself with any other means but a camera was very far away from me.

Today the technique is so perfect that we have no more to worry about all the details, all the technical details—not enough. And I'm sorry about that. Maybe it's more difficult to make a good picture today because our technique is too perfect. For instance, I give you only one example. It is what we call the "lap dissolves." When we want to dissolve from one scene to another, today we just cut the scene. The director says "Cut," the camera stops, the actors stop acting; and then we start another scene—maybe another day, maybe another month—and in the lab they manage to do a lap dissolve between the end of the first scene and the begin-

ning of the next scene. When I started in the movies it was impossible to do such a thing in a lab. That means that we had to know exactly where to start the dissolve and end the first scene, and when to start the next scene on the same piece of film with the same camera. We didn't dare make a mistake. We were really the prisoners of the technique and I believe that was very good. Now, today when I am shooting a picture I have a cameraman who takes care of the photography, (and very well)—I have to do what? I have to be careful about what is in front of the camera. That's all. I have to be careful about the actors acting properly, and about the color of the pieces of furniture not being too ugly, the drapes, and that's all. That's nothing. It's not a big job. And, well, when it's finished, it's finished. Other people take care of the cutting. My job becomes a kind of supervision. But to me supervision is not art. The art is only the fact of the man who does things with his own hands.

Today it is almost impossible in a movie to have the same man doing the whole thing. I still do it myself, but I may be one of the few last ones. And it is a very big job because the technique is at such a point of perfection, it takes an awful lot of time. My last movie took me one year, more than one year, which to me is ridiculous. In one year I should have the time to tell twenty stories. I had twenty stories in mind and I told only one. It is why, now, I am no more so much the enemy of any other form of expression as I was. And I'm starting to write books, I'm starting to write stage plays. I love television. You know, I believe that with the improvement in technique we have to give up—unfortunately—the old conception of handcraft. We have to become—as modern people are—specialists.

Now I'm probably more a specialist in story-telling than in anything else. And now to tell a story by the way of a camera or through the way of a typewriter or on a stage, to me it is a little bit the same thing now. And I'm sorry about that because I believe it's the mark of the end of a civilization. I may be too pessimistic, but still I loved the making of my first films when, we had, you know, to push the little cart for a traveling shot ourselves. And I remember a picture I did. I even developed the whole film and I printed it in my own kitchen. Well, that was wonderful. I must say.

Now about the theme. I told you that the form (we were talking about neo-realism and the nice old Hollywood style) is not so important, that only what we have to say is important. That would mean that the theme is important. Well, actually I don't believe that the theme is important either.

What is important? I don't know exactly what is important, but in Shakespeare there is one thing I love. Maybe it's what I love the most in Shakespeare. It's the fact that each character talks differently and is different, according to the people he's confronted with. Let's take a hero in Shakespeare. If he talks to a butler or to a workman in the street he talks like a workman. If he talks to theatrical people he talks like an actor. If he talks to a king, he talks in verses. Well, that's wonderful. I love it.

Today, well, people are bothering us with constant "consistency in characters." Well, who is consistent in life? I know that myself, I'm not consistent. I don't believe that anybody around me is consistent. We are shaped by the outside facts of life. The surrounding is terribly important about us, and the surrounding changes. Only the man who would remain in a small room surrounded by always the same people and the same pieces of furniture and the same weather and the same temperature would be consistent, but any other man who is impressed by the outside world cannot be consistent. He changes with the outside world.

Well, I also think to tell you that if I don't believe in the form I don't believe either in the theme, and if I don't believe in the theme I don't believe in what people call message. Now I believe in what? Well I believe in something which is extremely difficult for me to express. Maybe I cannot express it. I believe in a kind of marriage or blending between this outside world, which changes all the time, which is so wonderful, which we have to absorb, to incorporate into our own soul, our own body—I believe in this blending with our own personality, with our self, with our humble desire to represent this outside world.

Now, for instance, when this combination is something genuine, unexpected that is created, well, that is a work of art. If what is created is just the banal repetition of what we read or see, anywhere, well, we have nothing.

Bachmann: About style. When you say that in every picture that you make you like to discard what you have learned before and find a new style. Are you always successful in finding that new

style before you start or do you—as I would presume—develop your style and get new ideas for it as you go along?

Renoir: As I go along, and even after. Very unfortunately for me—or fortunately, I don't know—I belong to the kind of people who can understand a question only when they are confronted with the question. For instance, I understand the meaning of a part when I see the actor play the part. Then I understand that in the dialogue for this part I only need a half of what I had to say, or I have to add things, or I have to be more precise, or I understand that some of the parts of the dialogue are repetitious, or useless. Now the actor brings me close to my own story. It is a blending.

For instance, you know Giraudoux in France. Well, Giraudoux is supposed to be the great stylist and everybody believes that he wrote very precisely all his lines before giving the book to Louis Jouvet for the repetitions,* that they were written with a diamond pen on a sheet of gold. Well not at all, Giraudoux used to write very fast, not too precisely, and to become very precise when he used to see the repetitions. And during the repetitions all of a sudden the sense of a scene—a scene invented by himself—was clear to him. And he was realizing that he had put a scene without knowing exactly what he wanted, but only by watching—I should say, spying—the actors act the scene, he could understand the meaning of the scene.

Probably Shakespeare did the same thing. He used to write for his actors. He knew that such and such an actor would be wonderful in the part of a king, and just for the pleasure of seeing this actor play a king he used to write a play about a king. That's very important: that's the way a theme, the way art should be practiced. It is in connection with reality, with human reality.

Bachmann: This is in a sense a revolutionary point of view because I was speaking recently with a person who expressed himself very strongly to the effect that unless a creative artist has complete control (with foreknowledge) of what he intends to do, he's no longer a creative artist but only an experimenter who accidentally creates; and this person completely disclaimed any validity to creation by accident, by empirical method, like the theory you advance.

Renoir: I am absolutely convinced that a very great artist two

* Rehearsals.

or three times in his life has a clear view of some work. For instance, it is very possible that Molière had it for *The Misanthrope*. That's possible, and it's not sure. But if what I know about many great artists is true, they were experimenters. They experimented all the time, and they were testing, trying, they were more like a sculptor who pushes the clay with his fingers and when he sees the shape, well, he understands that by pushing a little more the clay to the other side he could give to this shape more meaning, a meaning he didn't understand himself before starting the statue.

When we say that we must not change during the work, I believe that's not true because it's a bad chance that the most important manifestation of Christian religion is called Communion. It's very important, Communion. And people now believe that Communion means to swallow a piece of bread alone in a church. That's not true. Communion means to be together—and to take very much from the other fellows and to give very much to the other fellows. That's the meaning of it. And a work of art is a communion. And during the making of the work of art you must be in a state of communion, you must give and take. And if you don't do it, it's a pure creation of the brains, and the brains are only a part of our body—and not the highest part.

To go back to the theme, to the unimportance of the theme. You know, in the Greek tragedies, which are considered as great by many of us—the authors naturally used to tell the public a story they already knew. They had heard it a thousand times, and to make sure that they wouldn't be caught by the very vulgar feeling of surprise the Greek Chorus used to tell them the story again, once more, to be sure that they knew it. Today of course a show is based on surprise only—what they call suspense. Well, I'm trying to fight against that. I believe that a show should be based on feeling. Again communication. A kind of communion between the artist, the actors, the world and the audience.

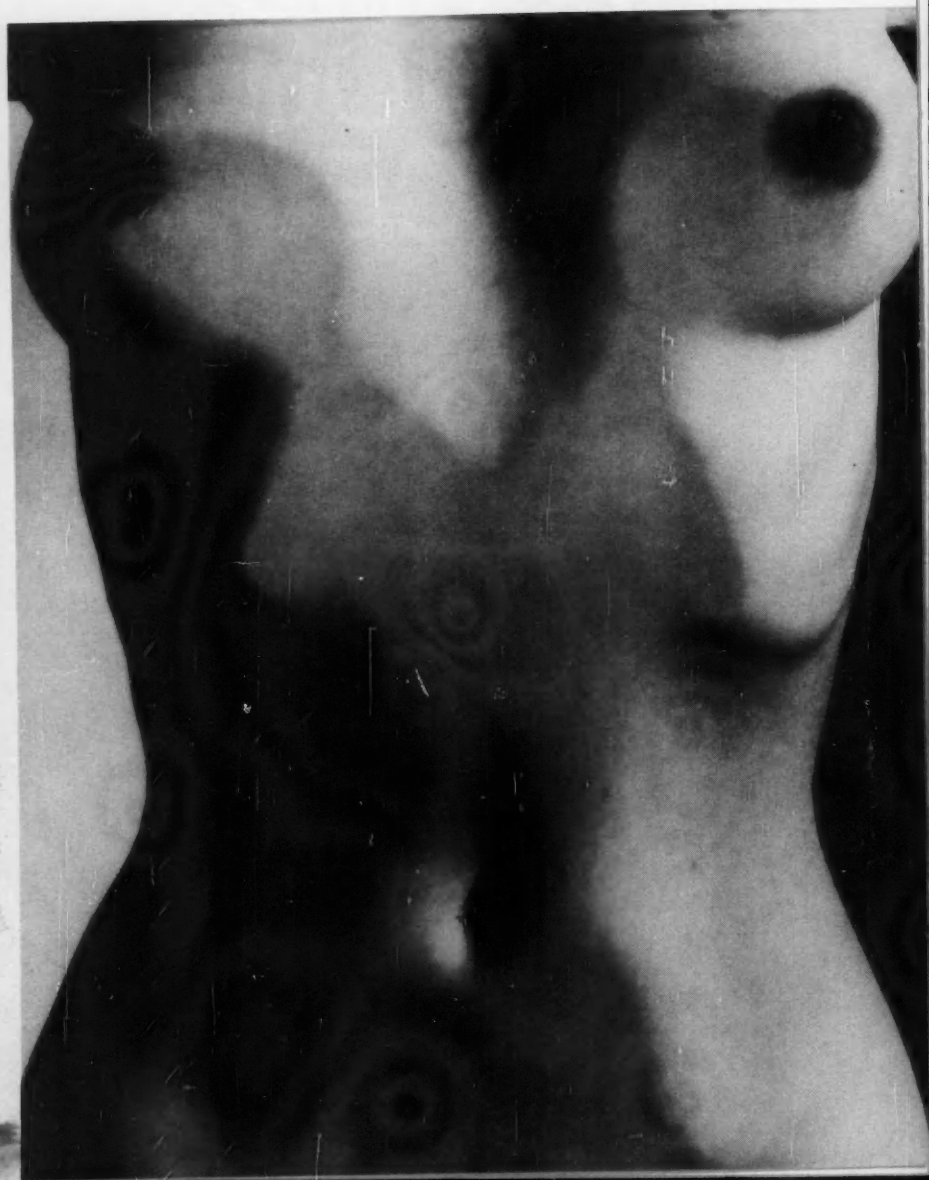
Gideon Bachmann broadcasts Film Forum for WBAI, the Pacifica Foundation in New York. Originator of Cinemages, "a serious periodical devoted to the creation of an intelligent audience for a mature screen product," Bachmann lectures at Columbia, heads the American Federation of Film Societies, and expects his book *Robert Flaherty and the Experimental Film* to be published this fall.

Jean Renoir, dividing his time between Paris and America, has since 1924 made more than 30 films. The second son of painter Pierre Auguste Renoir, he is now a Regent's Professor in Dramatic Arts at the University of California in Berkeley.

Ruth Bernhard

FORMS WITHOUT FACES













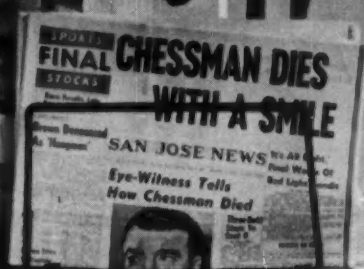
Ruth Bernhard says:

"... it is a strange thing today—you must have 35mm—you must go out and catch things, and they use a word of violence, 'To shoot.' This thing to me—Photography—is a matter of concentration and philosophy. I must communicate with a blade of grass to show its magnificence. I cannot do this by shooting at it!

"In my work I try to express the oneness I see in the universe . . . Life and death are two words for the same thing—all fragments of the living order; the illumination of which leads to the underlying philosophy of the expression of creative artists. And as in a mirror, the responsible observer will discover in the work not only the artist's reflection but his own image as well. This way we share and communicate and fulfill a deep human need."

Ruth Bernhard was born in Germany in 1906. She was educated at the Academy of Art, Berlin, in 1925. In 1930 she began a lifetime of teaching herself photography.





—John Hendricks

"I saw something in my life
made me sick and I just
had to throw it up . . . So I threw it up . . .
Started bustin' up the joint."
"You mean you smashed up the place?"
"Yes."

—*The Fugitive Kind*

Friday, May 13, 1960
San Francisco, California

TO: Rep. Francis Walter (Dem.-Pa.)
Chairman
House Un-American Activities Committee
City Hall
San Francisco, California

SUBJECT: SUBVERSIVE GROUPS IN THE BAY AREA

Mr. Chairman, Sir:

Although you have only this week arrived in our part of the country, and although it begins to look as though you may not stay long, I wish to bring the following to your most honorable attention and that of your respected committee. As your council, Richard Arens, suggested in interrogating one former Communist, now working with the FBI, I believe, my motives are simply and most sincerely, "God and patriotism." These same motives, I'm sure, dictate your, Senator Eastland's and Mr. Arens' connection with Mr. Wycliffe Draper's campaign to ship Negro Americans to Africa* via, I hope, something less than first-class accommodations.

Not only does such a project offer all the satisfaction of serving God and country but it enables Mr. Arens to realize \$3,000 per year as legal consultant. This, like working for Henry Luce, is what I call making "God and patriotism" attractive!

But the subject of my letter is these anti-capital punishment

* See "Americanism and Genetics," *The Nation*, May 1, 1960.

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subversives. I'm particularly surprised and irritated by a local group who call themselves *The Marin Committee For the Abolishment of the Death Penalty*.** Obviously shot with semantically oriented advisors, they stress the word *Death*. This is typical of their approach. They take justice as it has been practiced since the Germanic tribes introduced the gallows to England in the Fifth Century, A.D., and try to make it just as gruesome as possible, try to accentuate the unpleasant side.

I dropped by San Quentin this morning. Two killers were scheduled to die. This is comparable, I guess, to that other favorite American pastime where they offer occasional "Double-Headers." The first of these was Donald Cash. Cash, who, having failed in numerous attempts to end his own apparently unsatisfactory life, turned to the State for help via the axe murder of his landlady. Romance or passion seem to be lacking even though Cash did proceed to sexually violate the bloody corpse. It is more widely felt in official circles that a "death wish" was manifested and that she simply was closest at hand when this somewhat novel solution to his problem presented itself. Governor Brown, a visionary of sorts, concluded shortly before the execution that the man was mentally disturbed and Cash was hustled off to Vacaville, and I assume, treatment towards rehabilitation. Or will they merely try to get him in better shape for the ceremony? We wouldn't want a fiend like this to be incapable of appreciating the moral implications of his own execution.

The second attraction, a 28-year old cop-killer named James Hooten, did not fare so well. Justice, in his case, was done shortly after ten o'clock when he paid what is widely thought of as "the supreme penalty." He paid his debt to society, a society in which all men are created equal. He was created and nurtured a bit less so, but he died a bit less so too, so that should even up the score and keep the slate clean.

Hooten did seem a bit reluctant though. He made this rather

** Marin County, California; home of San Quentin and the gas chamber, and long known as a hot-bed of subversives.

unsportsmanlike statement in his last press conference: "It's hard enough to face death," he said, "but to know one must undergo torture before dying is almost unbearable."

Surely the State's previous victims have not testified to any torture and who else would know? Who else would know whether one simply dies post-haste as scheduled or whether they suffer the inconceivable mental and physical agonies of the damned? The American Medical Association, whose concern this might logically be, has, as far as I know, made no statement.

Some newsmen who have witnessed such rites of complete punishment seem to believe they know something about it. But they are renowned as an overly sentimental group so why place much faith in reports such as the following by Will Stevens of *The San Francisco Examiner*. (This is an abridged, but to-the-point summary by this writer.)

"Chessman seemed to see no one at first. Very swiftly he was strapped into chair "B," with the vacant chair to his left. One guard, fastening a strap around Chessman's chest, gave it a needless final tug. Chessman appeared astonished at this. At once he began having difficulty with his breath, even before the invisible hydrocyanic acid fumes began to do their calculated job. The steel door was closed.

Now Caryl Chessman was alone . . .

Too tight! Too tight!

At 10:03¼ the sound came . . . (the cyanide pellets dropping into the acid).

Chessman knew the script well. Now he, himself, was living it . . .

Now the first fumes hit him.

His whole body shuddered. For some strange reason, my notes read:

'Like a building—earthquake—!'

Then his head went up, and he looked toward the ceiling . . . Chessman tried to move.

Somehow, he managed to come up again. His head jerked and he was coughing, his mouth open. He was not running out of courage and never did, but physically he was going badly. The dying went on.

My notes read:

'This is more swift than the others—fantastic—gasping—white shirt collar open at the collar—saliva dripping from mouth—surely he is now completely unconscious . . .'

. . . He bounced his head violently, up and down, up and down, as though he were trying to shake it off the rest of his body. For a few seconds, I looked right into his eyes and there was agony in them—and, this reporter always will believe—momentary consciousness.

Even as I watched, something happened in his eyes—something died in them, and then his head turned as the gagging returned.

I cannot pin down the time element on this. The time can only be estimated at approximately six minutes after the pellets were dropped. Chessman went on dying.

And then:

'Chessman is still now. Agony seems to be over. Only his heart has not yet stopped beating. Tired lines in his face. Head down, wearily. He is weary.'

Later that night, May 2, I heard Stevens on a radio interview which had been recorded just following the execution. He was obviously overwrought emotionally, so much so, in fact, that he could hardly speak. This lack of self-control seems apparent in his report too. One might also add, if it seemed like six minutes to him as a witness, how long must it have seemed to Chessman?

I was amused too when Forest Lawn refused Chessman's ashes. This is courageous thinking particularly in light of the fact that Chessman's mother already was a resident and I assume the money paid for the plot, or at least a portion of it, had to be refunded. What decent memorial cemetery wants a beast like Chessman contaminating the place? A person like this interred in a place

that prides itself in "Foreverness," a place with one of the most important collections of imitation art on the West Coast! It reminds me of the trash that keep trying to move into respectable neighborhoods. Plot-values would have nose-dived!

Which brings me to the real point of my letter and, I feel, of your committee. All of these people are un-American! Whether they are protesting, under the guise of humanists, for the abolition of capital punishment, or, under the guise of democratic equality, calling for "fair" employment and housing practices, or, under the guise of Constitutionalists, they are demonstrating for an end to such fundamental and vital committees as yours.

I won't say they're *all* commies but it's hard to tell the difference and we both know that the commies are all about us, ready to take over on a moment's notice. Many so-called "thinkers" are saying that this country is getting fat of belly and slim of heart and mind, but they're *mad*! We can't afford to take chances with unconventional or individual thinking.

No one seems to have a clear idea of what this country stands for anymore or where it may be going so who's going to fill this vacuum? You and I, and men like us, with God's help.

The honorable Governor of Mississippi knows what's happening, where danger lurks and how to deal with it. He has just reinforced his efforts to make Mississippi's schools and libraries safe for children, and, in so doing, is protecting his voters too. He's getting rid of trouble-making authors like Jack London, Arthur Miller, Carl Sandburg and Archibald MacLeish. What does their kind know about *real* Americanism?

But to get back to capital punishment. Why must these executions be conducted in such comparative secrecy? It's almost as though we were ashamed of what we are about. I've never seen an execution and neither have my kids. Not many people have, I'll bet. So why doesn't some alert sponsor, say American Cyanide, Johnson and Johnson or Rose Exterminator Company, realize that these could be real *spectaculars* to replace, perhaps such high-rated productions as "You Asked For It" or "This Is Your Life"? If—as many psychiatrists and psychologists have conjectured in defending television for children—violence, mayhem and blood-lust,

EDITORIAL

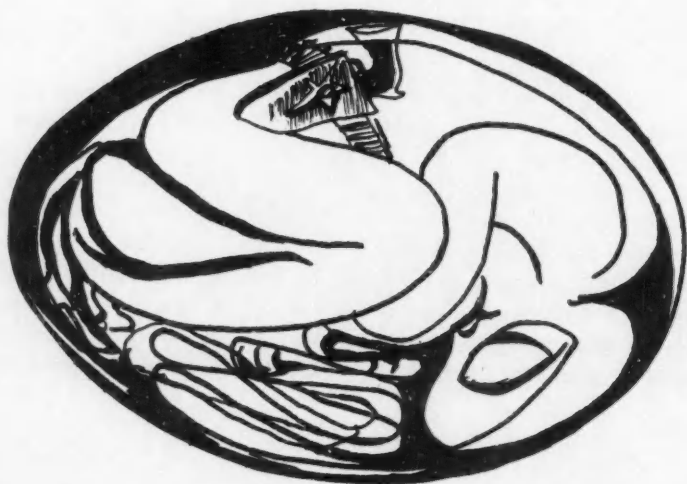
when graphically portrayed, serve as an outlet for similar drives and emotions and tend to spend the human being's desire to kill and maim his fellow man. What could serve as a more efficient cathartic and moral lesson than "The Execution Hour"? The short-lived star could either be selected at random from the audience or be chosen by UNIVAC like the couples who are ideally paired on "People Are Funny" or whatever show it is. The Federal Communications Commission is always harping about "Public Service Programming." What could be more of a public service than this?

In any case, I know you'll do what you can to put an end to such unrest and subversion. I'm ready and willing to name names, give dates, places, everything. I could be a most satisfying witness. Please let me know at least a few days before my scheduled appearance, though, since I'm a bit inconsistent with my MAN-TAN.

Yours for mother, God and country (Inc.),

Mr. Clean (taxpayer)

P.S.: I have just heard how our city's elite law enforcement agents took care of those commie toughs who started a riot at your hearing today—clubbings, fire hoses and arrests—someone in City Hall obviously speaks our language!



WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

THE ITALIAN GARDEN

When she married years ago
her romantic ideas dominated
the builders.

nightingale and hermit thrush
then the garden fell
into disuse.

Now her son has taken up her
old ideas formally
shut out

by high walls from the sheeprun.
It was a scene from Comus
transported

to upper New York State. I re-
member it already ruined
in

early May the trees crowded
with orioles chickadees
robins

brown-thrashers cardinals
in their scarlet
coats

vocal at dawn among pools
reft of their
lilies

and rarer plants flowers
given instead to
mallows

pampas grass and cattails by
drought and winter
winds

where now hummingbirds touch
without touching.
Mosscovered

benches fallen apart among
sunken gardens
where

The Faerie Queen was read
to strains from
Campion

and the scent of wild strawberries
mingled with that
of eglantine

and verbená. Courtesy has
revived and
visitors

begun to stroll the paths as
in the Quatro Centro
covertly.

Maybe it will drive them to
be more civil
love

more jocosely (a good word) as
we presume they did
in that famous

garden where Boccaccio and
his friends hid
themselves

from the plague and rude manners
in the woods of
that garden

as would we similarly today
to escape the plague
of

our cars which cannot
penetrate
here.

Judson Jerome

MY COMPETITION WITH SHAKESPEARE

Although to be sociable I am willing to gripe along with the next guy, my heart isn't in it. I must admit, unfashionably, that I'm really very happy. Mostly this is because of my competition with Shakespeare.

As regularly as we sleep and wake we cooperate and compete in complementary phases. Both phases are essential, but people disagree as to the proper proportion and emphasis in the formula for happiness. Conservatives contend that life is getting ahead, liberals that it is getting along. Husbands take one side, wives the other, as do winners and losers, hunters and farmers, children from square table nurseries and those whose tables were round. One sets out, unprepared, to *live*; the other orders from Society a Universal Do-It-Yourself kit and makes life a family project. One cries in the wilderness; the other finds Truth with a committee. Satan is for achievement, God for security. One loves himself, the other—nobody in particular.

Both, of course, find both misery and happiness.

The competitive fellow frets himself to glory. His lonely tower stands against the sky and his watch on its battlements is nervous,

tireless, his naps restless and gnawed by the friendly mice: fear and desire. Even his children, he thinks, are out to get him; but his art and science, his defense and offense, curiously remain on the desert after he has been forgotten. In trying hopelessly to save himself he has made the world worth saving.

The cooperator saves the world, a fond task of a mother collecting scattered toys. He knows that if the bread truck did not arrive at its appointed hour, if the traffic did not observe its lanes and stop at the lights, the world would collapse like any house of cards—in which the chief virtue is stillness. He is in favor of progress, of course, but knows you cannot build the house of cards unequally; we all become happier together. His love is benign: he goes to bed like a heating pad, and dreams no dreams. If, in his sea of satisfaction, he feels an aching heart it is because some boats are sinking. Or, sometimes, because beneath the excitement of the surface, the pitching waves and weather, there is no flow: he hasn't even the illusion that he is going anywhere, really.

My way, and I recommend it, is to compete with Shakespeare. I will not keep up with nor surpass the Joneses because that contest has no relevance to my real engagement. I cooperate as an interim measure—not because I have much faith in cooperation but because it makes my only competition possible.

I will not twitch with envy or despair *because* I see no possibility of winning and never dream of what it would be like to win. Moreover (and this is, in my game, easy), I love my enemy, Shakespeare, more than myself: I play against him in admiration; there is no question of vanquishing. Also, there is no question of giving up: I enjoy the fight, the better my performance the better I enjoy it, and the sense that it can never be won is exhilarating.

One is in the ring with Shakespeare, whether he realizes it or not, just as he is with Hitler. The peaks and chasms of human achievement are the borders of our field. We create meaning and direction by exceeding the meaningless, by exceeding our lostness. Sure, we were born into a world we never made, jostled to walk into the wind with no notion of where we are going, howling in the chaos of the given. Sure, we must say patiently—sure. There is no sense we do not make. But we *can* make. Shakespeare made. Whatever misery he may have suffered, his private self, his very

identity—all has been rubbed away. But his work stands impassively, bigger than anyone's understanding of it. He shows up in our confusion and tears. Clearly one can do something about life—and until he *has*, until he has accepted the challenge of Shakespeare, his blows are random, his wailing has no hearers.

Nothing matters but that competition. One is free to be kind because there is no threat from others. One is free to draw a breath of indifference because the embroiling affairs, the petty slights and impermanent victories, because all the vexatious details with which existence is riddled, are nothing to that serene and long engagement. It means nothing to beat those who have beaten you: only to beat Shakespeare; there are no secondary successes. Get along. Compromise. Cajole. Mere affairs of neighbors and friends, mere hot little hostilities of cross men confused, do not deserve the energy they seem to demand. Save all for the battle. We may draw a breath and lift our sights. Surpassing Shakespeare would be an act with definition. Short of that our infinitesimal acts are so nearly alike one need not pick them out and give them names. Oh, love your neighbor and he will distract you less; forgive your enemy and he will tire of flailing the air; accept the blame, no matter how unjust, and they will let you get back to your work.

Free of fashion, free of resentment; except for the most presumptuous ambition of all, free of ambition; except for the only sustaining desire, free of desire—all this when you compete with the best you see in your longest view. Pity Shakespeare—who had no Shakespeare to compete with: his achievement is all the more remarkable. If one really were condemned to listen to the critic of the moment, to perfecting his paltry loves or relying on the value of his paltry deeds, he would, indeed, despair. Some seem to take their life in the current very seriously—but I cannot believe they commit themselves totally to it: they could not bear to live. Some strand from their minds must anchor in the rocks. If they strengthened that tie, if they knew where it was anchored, they could more certainly ignore the stream.

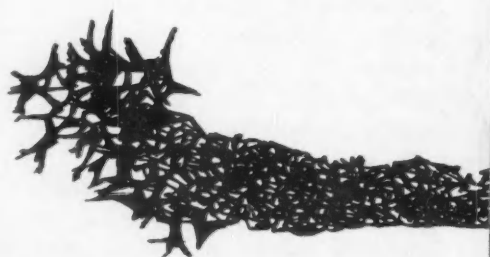
God will not do. It must be Shakespeare. Partly because he is *not* God. Not a single one of his works is perfect: his whole production is ragged with flaws and inconsistencies that you can see

and I can see and to which Shakespeare must have been sublimely oblivious. (Surely there *was* some Shakespeare with whom he was competing, some struggle which made trivia seem trivia.) He was professional: he went in, found out what the boys were doing and did it better, taking what he could get his hands on and slapping it into meaning, rough-hewn—as divinity shapes our ends. His human imperfections make him all the more imposing as an adversary. Like Moby Dick he sounds, bearing his harpoons and fouled lines indifferently down, as one irritably breaks through a web. Nothing divine about him. No excuses for us, denied that rationalization that we are a different order of being. He did what we would do if we could, and left no Taj Mahal behind him, no polished tomb, but a rambling rabbit-warren of creation, a ramshackle monstrosity bustling with life. And it is the greatest edifice of the human mind.

That is, until you, until someone, whips the old battler at his game (which is not, basically, poetry, but creation). That victor will have to keep his wits through every distracting moment, will be lost in no critical quarrels, will have rested on no minor successes, will not have bothered to measure himself against his mere contemporaries, will never have lost sight of the single object that could give his efforts dignity. He competes, but only with the best; he cooperates because that frees him for his struggle. But, above all, his is a happy fight, good all the way, and good to win, and the giant, if vanquished, will go down gladly. This kind of progress draws the world along behind.

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George Bluestone



THE AGE OF COPROPHILES

IT WAS A BAD TIME to come. I sensed that the minute I opened the door and saw Ellie's face in the yellow light. Outside, I'd seen the late season gnats skipping around, doubtful of the yellow bulb in the Mexican lantern, an Ellie touch.

"Oh, Bert," she said, her voice rising over the last echo of the door chimes, "come on in. We were beginning to worry. You get hung up on that construction?"

I remembered the equipment working overtime in the dark, the bite of monstrous bits gouging the mountain by the light of camping torches. Half the time in low, I'd had to skirt the danger signs, those wooden horses smoking with kerosene bombs. How had Ellie known? I should have learned by then never to be surprised at Ellie Corshin's grab-bag information.

"Where's Marv?" I asked, settling into the familiar basket chair. Immediately I was catered to. Before I'd even loosened my tie, Ellie had slipped me an icy glass, bourbon-on-the-rocks, my regular nightcap. She has a creepy memory for details like that, as precise as the day I met her. It's a little chilling to remember I hadn't been there since New Years. Then Gerard was on me, the



—Seymour Locks

officially friendly boxer, his ridged mug looking for affection.

"Get your mutt off me," I said, clamping my hand over his nose like a muzzle, pretending I didn't mean it. I never have gone much for that obvious kind of love. Besides, I was tired.

"Gerard, now you behave yourself," Ellie said, "Bert's not in the mood—"

I'd been siphoning my drink awhile when she told me, "Marv's in the basement. Putting in bookshelves. Poor guy, he's overflowed the study. Must have the whole British Museum in there by now. On facsimile. It's a regular tropical plant, that book of his. Started growing, never stopped."

I talked to Ellie, telling her about the trip, about the kid from Reed I'd picked up on the way up from Frisco, the kid turning white when I started taking some of those turns at sixty. When Marv finally came up, I was really glad to see him, but I felt a hollow beat in the air when I saw his face, drawn over somehow, like the sawdust pollen on his fingers. He came over slowly, the V-toed shuffle of men who never have to run, and it was still Marv, and for awhile it was the way it had always been, the grounded ease, the fire thriving on a clever base of Presto logs. All they needed was Deller on the hi-fi.

"How's Remedial Reading?" Marv grinned, dusting his hands on his corduroy pants.

"Money in the bank," I said. It was a defensive gesture as usual, my collusive self-mockery. I've never been very good at binding up Marv's swift incisions. Marv's joke had grown claws by then, our laughter turning plaintive as a single note on Ellie's carved recorder. Ever since I'd decided to trade in my foolish 4x6 cards for a fat check, the Corshins had kidded me. Now that I was second in command at the Remedial Reading Clinic up there on Russ Hill, at the end of the Powell Street cable car line, the kidding had switched to mild derision. There was a difference of fifty nifty years, they knew, between old man McCready and myself, and no no-man's land of vice presidents and junior partners to strafe across. I'd gone down there with my eyes open, trading my index cards for the Harvard Rapid Reading films. I'd seen to it that old man McCready liked me, and now I was next in line. For what I wanted, the choice had been a wise one. And the

Corshins knew it. That was a Mercedes out in the driveway.

"Remember old lady Caslin? Got her to reduce her blink rate eighty percent. The old man's proud of me." But my own eyes were falling closed, the bourbon helping. And though we were tempted to talk, Marv sent me off to bed.

"We both need a good night's sleep," he said. "They're having one of those promotion meetings tomorrow."

That should have warned me. I went to bed, dreaming half-dreams, hearing half-phrases—bright curls of premonition—knowing from what Ellie said that Marv hadn't finished the "book," and that this would count against him. Once again, the committee would be sitting in judgment. I got to thinking what a nice semi-annual retreat the Corshins had built, then offered, the rounds of comfortable, bilious talk, the nice dependency, the easy grace. Drawing me back to the time I'd sat in Marv's classes, those clear, blue-eyed days when he could still play the vein of celebration in Hopkins: "Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs . . ." absently fingering the frayed cuffs of his jacket. It was still good to be able to commune with them, to tell them things I could never divulge to old man McCready. About the women who come out of the tri-level houses around the Presidio to improve their reading speed for *Vogue* and Betty MacDonald. Or the harried cigars, at fifty-five, who suddenly discover a desperate need to read the tooling reports from the rod and cam department. Fast! I can't do that at the Clinic. Old man McCready still has some of the Grant Wood farmer in him. He doesn't like me to kid the customers.

In the morning, swatches of sunlight woke me. I bolted up to see the lake, brilliant now, spooned with shaky silver. And when I wandered downstairs, the light was pouring across the yellow leatherette in the breakfast nook where Ellie was tearing English muffins for the toaster. Next to the butter dish stood a pot of her homemade boysenberry jam. She'd remembered that, too. Ellie really didn't want to talk, but I managed to pry it out of her anyway. Lawrence and the committee would be meeting at ten, Lawrence Colby who wanted his staff to call him Larry, though no one ever quite managed it. As long as I can remember, his breezy name had gone stiff in the mouth, as if no one could altogether forget his authority. What would they be saying now, tapping pencils on dittoed dope

sheets, lamenting Marv's dawdling, maybe even questioning the tactical value of a book supposed to prove that the Church was irrelevant to Hopkins? Even when Ellie wasn't talking about it, I could feel the excruciating crawl of the clock.

"Now what's that racket out there?" Ellie said suddenly, over a beaker of orange juice.

I remembered the motor, interleaved with sunlight, startling me out of sleep. But I'd muted it, the way I always do, by a simple shift in attention, until by the time I bit into the English muffin, I'd stopped hearing it altogether. Ellie's irritation reminded me, again, of how inexhaustible she'd always been. Even her blue-platinum glasses, sweeping up like elm-leaves, couldn't hide the disarming stare that had shamed armies of bureaucrats, including the Mayor and Hollander the Wise, the University's durable president. Anyone who hasn't seen it can't possibly imagine Ellie's special style in chairing a meeting, even when Marv was there handing around the postcards. I'm sure she would have ended up in the State Legislature if Marv hadn't gone into teaching.

"That noise, it really files away at your nerves," she said, sitting down at last to a breakfast of her own. I wondered if she'd been more shock-resistant in the old days. In the whip of city winters, she'd once handed out that gray absorbent paper which seems to be protocol for leaflets, or used to be, before the unions got wise to tinted tones and fruity gloss. I remember seeing one of the old-time leaflets that Marv and Ellie still had around, a relic from the decade of skirmishes which the Longshoremen had waged against the Shipowners. Marv and Ellie still talked nostalgically about the Shipowners, reserving the chilly respect one always has for blood enemies, now prolonged by the memory of flung hooks and creaking winches, continually forgetting that the battle had been joined, and won, over twenty years ago. The sheet displayed a fierce cartoon—the lines clean, stark, unequivocal—a hairy fist squeezing the port like an egg, and the horrified mouths of the populace, their hands thrown over their heads like insane cheer leaders. It must have been very effective in its day, though I could tell from Ellie's giggle that she knew how naive it looked in the cold white light of the sensible fifties.

"Don't worry about it, Ellie," I said. "Just think how good it'll feel when it stops."

I'd come in with the second class of veterans, a rare civilian freshman, a stranger to the boys with sheepskin collars. I remember my envy of those suntan-vets, exiles from the clarity of war to the muddy ambiguities of peace. I hadn't been old enough for the "big" one, though they liked to keep assuring me, "You didn't miss a thing, kid . . ." which always made me feel as if I had. Later, I managed to get myself deferred long enough to miss the police action which popped and dragged around that shaky line called the thirty-eighth parallel. I seem to have a gift for squeezing by that way. That's why I've been so successful at McCready's gentle subterfuge. Marv always needles me about it, says I've picked the gates of horn where *he* could never last. Stuck beyond the gates of ivory, he knows how thin disguises wear. He says disguises aren't needed there, because in that world of windy dreams they blow away like tissue masks. That's why, I tell myself, I've ended up with old man McCready, my future safe as cutouts, why Ellie and Marv have ended up asea, a little anachronistic under the surgical ribs of the TV aerial. That morning, it all seemed drowned in the cutting wheeze of the engine outside, while memory folded back.

By the time I arrived in '46, the Corshins had already made their legend. Part of it, I suspect, was that Ellie liked to see sparks fly, and sometimes she was guilty of personally grouping the tinder. Before I ever took a course with Marv, I'd heard how Ellie Corshin had done publicity for the Longshoremen back in the thirties, how she'd once lithographed a strike poster which had caused such a sensation that the advertising council, screaming "incendiary," had successfully banned it from every billboard in town. I learned how she sneaked out between points on the agenda to do her shopping at Farmers Market, still a favorite of hers. I imagine her with fuchsia ink on her fingers, working her way through stalls of immaculate artichokes and brussels sprouts, avoiding the wash of lettuce near the curb, then slipping back to the union hall with a bag redolent of greens for tomorrow's dinner.

I arrived in time to see the tail-end of it, how she and Marv, almost singlehandedly, had opened the downtown restaurants to

negroes after the war, how they'd gone right down to the jail the day Ollie Anderson got out, packed him off in the rattling Dodge, and drove him to campus for a fund-raising talk. Anderson had appeared in a denim shirt, buttoned at the collar like a choker, sleeves rolled up above the elbows, a longshoreman to the end (oblivious of proprietary ties and Scotch tweeds), to explain, in a voice almost too bland to be heard, the State's maneuver of putting him away for contempt because he'd refused to turn over his records to some roistering federal committee. Ellie still had the clippings in that giant scrapbook I used to thumb through, the pages bulging with unpasted strips of newsprint.

The local papers had stormed all right, the first warning of the scourging irons. The Mayor had issued a cryptic statement about the University's criminal use of taxpayers' money, and even Lawrence Colby, under pressure from Hollander the Wise, had warned the Corshins to be careful. The hornets were loose in the President's office, and the Department had heard the buzz. I suppose that even then Hollander was fine with single complaints. He could stand those potshots from Olympia—the politicians were elected for that after all—but for some reason he'd always panicked before alumni delegations. The serious, cuff-linked protectors had come like good scouts, making it clear in basso voices ringing with destiny that "something's got to be done about the Heineman-Corshin crowd." The manicured phalanx had its way at last. Heineman was gone, and the Corshins had switched to carpentry and pepper grinders. I remember the way Ellie used to talk about the smorgasbord buffet they'd had after the talk that night Ollie Anderson got out of jail, and Maury Heineman still around to stick toothpicks in the herring. She doesn't talk about it anymore.

"Nice day for the firing squad," I heard, and it was Marv coming up from the basement, dressed in his blue sweat shirt and baggy corduroy pants. I could tell from the spatter of brown stain on his fingers, dotting the sawdust film, that he must have been up early to finish the bookshelves.

"Why in the world do they have to meet on *Saturday*?" Ellie said petulantly. "Oh, sweetheart, not the dish-towel!" Marv hung the towel back on its hook, finished dusting his hands on his seat. I knew that what she really resented was being at the mercy—

was Marv's being at the mercy—of the half-dozen men ("the old ladies" she called them) who were still around from pre-Colby days, sitting like vegetables in the splendor of tenure and full professorships. Their position was so final, so unassailable, I had no trouble understanding Ellie's frustration: a handful of leftovers from a musty past, meeting for the second time in three years to decide if Marv was good enough to become one of them. The last time they'd turned him down, Ellie told me that Marv was closeted with Lawrence Colby for over an hour while Colby reviewed the entire meeting. "How much of our lives is decided between taps of a chairman's gavel," she'd sighed. Ellie has always been more ambitious for Marv than Marv is for himself. To his credit, Colby had given it straight: "Get the book done, Marv, and you'll have your promotion. You know if I had my way—"

What made the morning of my visit so bad was the gnawing awareness we all had that Marv still hadn't finished the book. I suspect he'd gotten to hate it by then, not because Hopkins had lost his power, but because compulsion had worked against him, draining off the joy. The last thing Marv published, a short piece in a small English quarterly, centers around those two lines from "Inversnaid":

. . . a pool so pitchblack, fell-frowning,

It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

And not a word of celebration. It was over six years, after all, since they'd found Heineman in that hotel room.

I resorted to assurances. "You're a great teacher, Marv. Why should the book—"

"That doesn't count anymore," he said sadly. We'd been through it before. "You don't get rewards for teaching. You're judged by your public relations value. It's the Age of the Coprophiles, remember?" It was Marv's affectionate handle for the clerk-crowd in Colby's inner circle, the uninspired drudges who filled up the libraries with dense, pin-head notes that no one read, least of all their colleagues. They had a way of becoming buddies with some of the younger men, fresh from the PhD drill schools, who treated teaching like a business and obediently hated students. I saw it coming, education by automation, crowding out men like Marv Corshin, a dying race, the classroom apostles who liked to read

and taught like it. I always felt a little ashamed listening to Marv and Ellie, knowing how laughter had become their last defense. Maury Heineman hadn't learned it in time. After three months in graduate school, I'd felt the brittle knife behind their smiles. It really scared me. McCready's Clinic may not be the answer either, but at least the old man has no pretensions to the humanistic life, and no tawny boxer named Gerard to decline him toward his utmost years. When I heard Marv talk the way he did, pulling up his step-stool for a second cup of coffee, I wished again I hadn't come. The tension crowded in on me. It would have been better if Ellie had written the news on one of her crazy postcards, a Braque on the back, or a baby gorilla—depending on her mood.

"And if they don't stop that noise, I'm going to do something drastic!" Ellie said, twitching in her leotards, a defiant ensemble for any morning, but typically outrageous now. Her protests had been reduced to flourishes like that. The more womanly gestures, I had to admit, were pretty effective. Between juice binges and *Slenderella*, she'd kept her figure.

Marv just sat there, his legs crossed like a section man on a break, crepe soled shoes instead of hobbled boots, the steam from the heathware cup wanting to smoke his glasses, so I said I'd see what was going on. I knew the coprophiles had put that slack, tired look on Marv's good face. Those small etchings of defeat told me better than anything else how slowly, how surely they were winning.

I went to see what was going on across the road not because I thought it would accomplish anything, but because it might make Ellie feel better. At the door Gerard was waiting, his cut ears high like Ellie's glasses, the stub of his tail winking carefully. I let him out, and he disappeared, loping behind the house. The scene was innocent enough. A caterpillar like those I'd seen on the way into town, its garish orange stippled with mud, was crossing and criss-crossing a turned up lot. It was rolling one of those mace-like levelers, so seeming brutal I wanted to turn away. Somehow I couldn't. Construction machinery always has that effect on me. Still, it was doing the job it was meant to do. Layers of brown marrow, neatly ridged, had been turned out of the opened earth.

The driver was raising a racket all right, but not as bad as Ellie had made out. He couldn't help it. That was a big hunk of hardware he was shoving around. And to tell the truth I was fascinated with the tricky way he ran the controls. I'm a crane watcher from way back, probably *because* it scares me. I've had my eye to knotholes in a dozen cities, above a thousand excavated pits, balanced on wooden walks to catch the naked power. This guy might have been a bruiser for all I know—I never got close enough to find out—but the machine made him look small, the way they always do.

"It's your buddy across the road. Working one of those levelers," I said, returning to my English muffins. "Hate to get caught under that. End up like a used punchboard."

"It makes you want to flip, honestly it does," Ellie said. "When we came out here, there was no one else around. Now look. It'll be a regular *suburb* soon." There's no way to describe the special horror in Ellie Corshin's pronouncement of that word. "You know who's building now?" she asked, challenging me to ignorance. "Some prof in Bus. Ed. They're closing in on us, Bert. They really are."

Marv smiled sadly, his buried wisdom, suggesting as always more than he said—he has that knack of overtone for gesture. "They had deer out here before the war. Would you believe it?" And I remembered the special tone that Marv and Ellie both reserved for "the war," a sense of hardship clouded with affection. I sometimes suspected that "the war" had been the best time for them, no matter how often they kidded its deadly absurdities. There was something gloriously simple in knowing that one had to deny the self to win, that one could find comfort in a Common Cause. It was the only time in their lives, I suspect, that they felt a happy concordance with everyone around them—President Hollander, the constabulary, even their friends. Everyone had gone, everyone had been there. "I was jealous as hell of them, Maury and Ollie," Ellie would say. "I know, they *could* have had their heads blown off. But who cared? There's a kind of sanctity in exposing yourself. Maybe they should have died heroes. The way things turned out, they might have been better off."

"Ellie, shhh," Marv said.

Ollie Anderson had been an oiler on a merchant ship, conveniently torpedoed off Guam so the Corshins could tell his story about the kid from Indiana who, coming up for air, had hollered over to Ollie, "Now what them Japs want to go aroun' blowin' up banana cargo for?" And Maury Heineman had won a special citation from General Donovan for his liaison work between the OSS and some Italian partisans around Turin. Later, when they'd found the citation among his papers, Marv had persuaded the estate to let him have it, another ironic memento to those buried years. It's still hard for me to reconstruct what it must have been like because by the time I met the Corshins the State had lowered the boom. I was only eleven when the war started, and I still tend to think of the whole thing as a kind of stagey, unformed fist fight.

About their own contributions to the war, Ellie and Marv were less nostalgic. She had gone into the aircraft plant that sprawls across the southern part of the city, spent the war sorting job slips, wistfully watching the busy lady welders, in weed-colored monkey suits, armed with acetylene torches. Marv didn't do much better. They had told him right off that his feet were flat and Marv had pretended surprise. In the end, the Army, desperate for manpower, had discreetly compromised. Marv ended up sorting pills and tetanus vials at Ft. Ord, itching like Mr. Roberts for the howl of real gunfire. Four years later he was mustered out, a medical sergeant, and left to beat his ignominious retreat back north. On the train ride home he'd stripped his uniform of ribbons, thus leaving his war record to the passengers' imagination.

They'd had four years scooped out of their lives, but the Corshins didn't seem to mind. "It was funny. There was something to look forward to then. A crazy sort of definition. It tore up your life, but somehow you endured." Ellie had stuck it out at the plant, not going down to join Marv, living in a maze of monthly rumor, the dim possibility that Marv's request for overseas duty might come through momentarily. Then it was over, as cruelly final as the two stunning blows from which they'd never really recovered—an enormous, columned flower blossoming over Hiroshima, and a state funeral, the clapping horses, the mournful train, on that last and forlorn ride to Hyde Park.

"It was better with the deer around," Marv added, rubbing the stony rim of his heathware cup.

"Oh, what is that man *doing*?" Ellie said, more and more irritated. "Sounds like a tiger's sneeze. Somebody *do* something."

"Still fighting the machine, Ellie?" I asked, wanting to distract her. Be careful, she used to tell me, or you'll wake up some morning, find your blood has changed to dynaflo. We'll all wake up. I'd tell her I couldn't see it. The mechanical man was theoretically impossible. She'd tell me not to be so sure.

"Damnright," she said, smiling truculently, Marv grinning approval. "You've got to throw sand in the machine, Bert. Sand is all we've got. You can't stop the PR colossus, we know that now. But you can still throw sand in the works. The other day in the Supermarket, I got the checker in a tizzy. Told her she'd made a mistake, wanted her to unpack the bags the boy had glutted, ring it up all over again. She wouldn't do it. Called the manager over. Said her Checker-of-the-Month reputation was at stake. People behind me were getting mad. When the manager made her ring it up again, it came to seventeen cents *more*. But I'd made my point. You see, they don't know what to do when you won't play the game, Bert." The last time I'd come up, Ellie was on another perverse kick, making the butchers let her smell the ground beef she'd order. She'd get her nose right down into it, on purpose, until their Meet-the-Public, 14 karat smiles would crack, and they'd make threats about the health inspectors, lady. One place had invited her not to come back at all. Ellie was always scoring points that way. I suppose it served its purpose, reminding me, and them, how violence boils below the skin. I suddenly remembered, over my third cup of Italian coffee—the height of luxury for me—how Marv would recite in the old days:

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod,

And all is seared with trade . . .

while my blue-eyed classmates, fighting the dazzle of fatter paychecks, sensed the enigmatic passion. Later, they'd go off to Korea like lambs, and fire into the air without knowing why.

"Man who can't twit his age, make it felt, is only half alive," Marv said. "That's the trouble with being a *tabula rasa*. It's so primeval. Like being scratched with God's instructive pin. For-

ever. Where's the humanity in that? Tattooed through eternity. Did Brother Dante miss that one? Well, Brother Kafka didn't."

While they talked, waiting for the phone to ring, I understood at last what a price they'd paid for survival. They'd drifted into the forties on a swell of passion, thrust along on old momentum, only to awaken, beached and alone, in the prosperous swollen fifties. Finally, under outright attack, they'd been stunned into isolation, caught at last in the line of real gunfire. His portfolio fat with dossiers, old Ed Bannister had come to campus with a gavel and ten committeemen, to groom himself for the Senate race in '52. He'd hammered out a steel tattoo, a little grateful, I always felt, for the Corshins' susceptible skin, feeling a perverted love for his victims. His tapping had been so successful that even Lawrence Colby had cracked. "All right, so you cooperate with them a little, Marvin. So what? Sometimes you have to bend to keep from breaking."

President Hollander had gone on to sign the Regents report calling for the dismissal of all recalcitrant radicals. They'd come as a delegation again, with strong alumni support, a united front straight from the barbers, and Hollander had fooled with the gold pen cap for ten whole minutes, it was said, before he signed at last. The only one who hadn't bent was Maury Heineman. He hadn't talked to Hollander, he hadn't talked to the committee, and he'd been summarily fired for his trouble. They'd used some nicely ambivalent point in the faculty handbook, the one on "moral grounds." It was the only way, Marv said, they could get around the tenure clause. The Committee's hammer grew louder, the Corshins' pace grew slower, and by the time Maury Heineman was gone, Ellie and Marv had beat a strategic retreat to cookery and carpentry. I suddenly saw Marv's sanding of the bookshelves as I hadn't seen it before, as a gesture against collapse.

"And if you don't get your promotion?" I asked. "What then?"

"Who cares? What's all the fuss about anyway? You'd think this promotion stuff was important, the way you talk."

"They make it important," Ellie said defensively.

"They couldn't if you wouldn't," Marv said firmly, as if he were nailing down a point in a school debate. He didn't reproach her often.

"You mean you really wouldn't care?" I asked, centering my

question on Marv. I wanted *him* to answer. I wanted to feel relieved for him.

"Oh, he'll get it," Ellie said morosely, as if it pained her to talk of it. "Sure, it'll be a pyrrhic victory—we've waited so long. But we'll get it. I have a feeling this time."

"Imagine me in the inner sanctum?" Marv said, refusing to believe it. "It's like the squire inviting the poacher into dinner" It was hard. I tried to picture Marv sitting there making policy with the coprophiles, but I couldn't quite make it. It cancelled out the picture I'd learned to project back through the years: Marv the quiet rebel. The thirties had come, the NRA bird rising like a blue pharos over the land. And one of the ironies, I remember Marv telling me, was that the time of hungry, wandering men, of asphalt desperation, would be remembered as good; that the ripe, lush afteryears would be remembered as bad. Even allowing for the charm, the patina of sentiment we like to lay over the past, I knew the feeling was genuine. Then the war had gone, leaving the sudden moraine where no birds fly, the Corshins mourning the ashes in that graven catafalque which had slammed shut with the death of Maury Heineman. What had kept them going? Ellie's reflective protest in the Supermarket? The exotic toss of cardamom and coriander seed? Marv channeling his grief into lathes and roofing? I didn't know. Not that the house sat in judgment on them, not at all. In a way it had saved them. I remember my last summer there, showing up guiltily for the second time, after the work was almost done. The first time out, when Marv was still pouring the concrete foundation, my shoulders had blistered in the sun and I'd spent the next two weeks rubbing on Noxema. I didn't dare come back until they'd started hammering on the shingles.

It was that day I told Marv I'd seen the handwriting on the wall and was thinking of getting out. I was too upset to remember much of what he said, except, "The brave are fierce; but it's the timid who endure . . ." I found myself apologizing for making other plans. Sitting there, perilously balanced, we'd shut off the sheathing square by square, until only one corner of the roof remained, like an exposed bone. I must have known what a little pocket of resistance the Corshins had built, the *Cordon Bleu* cook-

book their *vade mecum*, the spice shelf their survival kit. I'd seen them riven, driven to that forlorn foaming of the senses. They were good at it, too, building a shelter for protective coloration, knowing the walls weren't wiretapped because they had painted them, knowing that friends could still talk freely there. So the Corshins didn't have to explain their motives. When the house was done and I was gone, their motives were clear enough. They didn't have to tell me why they liked me to come up for weekend retreats. I needed a pocket of my own, and they had built one.

"Well, anyway, it's nice out here on the lake," I said, wanting to change the subject. Now I, too, was getting annoyed with the construction clamor across the road. "See you finished the rockery." Marv said something about the hardy winter plants, spiked like cactus, that had sprouted over the summer. Then he excused himself to finish staining the shelves. I thought I'd go on enjoying the luxury of a slow, leisurely breakfast with Ellie, the dishes left till noon. But I couldn't keep my eyes off the clock, its gold hands floating magically in a sea of glass. Ten o'clock had come and gone. We know that Colby would have started the meeting.

"Oh, yes, we love it here," Ellie said, slipping into Marv's stepstool seat. "We live in a world of grackles and starlings. And the stench comes through the walls. Guess it's like those privies Marv used to tell me about in the Army. You know. On bivouac? When you fill it up there's nothing to do but cover it up and move out, boys." I knew what she meant. When you reach the Northwest corner of the continent, the only place left to "move out" to is a stormy, rockbound sea.

It occurred to me that Marv hadn't answered my question.

We'd expected Colby to call around eleven but it was nearly eleven fifty when the phone rang.

"What else is there?" Ellie was saying, giggling over one of her devilish plots. "They've driven us into dacron corners. Killed us with success. First the iron fist, then the soothing honey. They make dogs neurotic that way, you know. But we'll outfox 'em yet."

The ringing exploded, even louder than the machine, and when Ellie reached for the beige extension, she nearly ripped the

phone off the hook. The dense silence right after that was worse. The distant, metallic syllables might as well have been coming from the water tower across the lake. I was busy writing my name in muffin crumbs. You could tell from Ellie's stance that Marv had picked up the phone in the basement. Then I saw what I didn't want to see, the deepening ruck above Ellie's elm-leaf glasses. I thought of Marv in the basement, his fingers holding a teak-stained rag. Then Ellie clapped a hand over the mouth-piece, performing an unfair parody of Lawrence Colby: "You *would* have gotten the promotion, Marvin . . ." And she had it, too, the measured speech, the proper pitch, her hand resting there to conceal her tapping. I wanted to be out in the Mercedes, thundering over some neutral, outbound road.

"Marv? Marv? Now listen, darling," she said suddenly. For a second I thought she had cut in on them. "Listen, *there's* always next year. We'll get the damned book finished and . . ." Then I knew that Colby had hung up, and there they were hollering to each other over the raspberry of the dial tone. "Come on up, Marv, please," Ellie said tenderly. Ellie and Marv rarely showed affection. When they did, it hit you like a harpoon. "Between that bulldozer and the buzz, I can't hear myself *think*." I'd switched to reading my fortune in the black dregs of my coffee cup. "Come up, dear. I just put on a fresh pot . . ." More than anger, I could hear love, and it touched me, like a stitch of pain. "What? What?" Ellie was saying. All I could hear was the cat outside, officiously noisy now. "All right, darling, I'll bring some down," and Ellie hung up in a gesture of cold fury.

"They've won," she said, as if somehow I wouldn't have known. "It's the age of the coprophiles, all right. They live on dung, like certain beetles. Make a note, Bert. Oh, it makes you want to spit, it really does. I'm *so* sorry to foul up your weekend this way."

I told her to stop being silly. I even moved to rinse some of the cups. But Ellie was already pouring a rich jet of coffee from the espresso pot.

"How's Marv?" I asked, trying not to show my concern.

"Oh, you know Marv. He's making jokes about it. Says Lawrence was more embarrassed than he was. I'll bet. He *sounded* more embarrassed. Well, they've been through it all before. Dance of the

tarantulas. Be right back, Bert. Finish the orange juice, will you?"

I'd been alarmed to see how old Ellie looked when she hung up the phone, and now that she was gone I felt even worse. The sudden quiet didn't help. For no good reason, I thought of the blanching kid from Reed. I sat there, too breakfast-full for any juice, the dregs now warm and pulpy in the plastic beaker, wondering what had happened to the guy across the road, to that roller stylusing the turned brown earth. I tried to imagine Marv's face, resisting disappointment, yet seduced by it, more for Ellie's sake than for his own, a kind of helpless shared conspiracy. Had he let it become "important" after all? "You know how Marv is," Ellie had said. I thought I knew. Ordinarily he kept a practiced lid on whatever brewed in him. The only time the lid had blown off had felt like unearthing a rock to find, below, a nest of teeming slugs. The dark days of October, 1950 . . . Snow had come with the news . . . Hollander the Wise had informed Maury Heineman that his services were no longer required. The student petition supporting Heineman had been ignored by a brace of adamant Regents, any one of whom would have been more than happy to take up Ed Bannister's gavel. Marv must have known what a fine point of law stood between his going to classes that fall and Maury's staying home, supposedly to finish a manuscript on Laurence Sterne, and to send out hundreds of letters in search of another job. I understand he didn't get many answers. Lawrence Colby had even written an honest recommendation for him, saying merely what was true: "He has always discharged his teaching duties with admirable *élan*. I might even go so far as to say that Professor Heineman ranks among the outstanding eighteenth century scholars of this or any country." It was a nice sop to conscience, but Marv was one of the few who understood Lawrence Colby's letter as an act of real heroism. I remember the endless discussions we used to have about the "case," the air of agonized complexity, the fine moments of introspection. Was Heineman right in refusing to have anything to do with the Bannister Committee? Or was Marv right, talking about himself, his own "past associations," but refusing to discuss anyone else? No matter how we cut it, our discussions always ended muddily. Maybe that was the trouble with us. Maybe that was why, with our overdeveloped sense of ambiguity, we could

offer so little help, even when Ellie and Marv were flailing the air only to stay alive. Neither a friendly nor an unfriendly witness, Marv had managed to survive that purgatory of weak definition, a maddeningly capricious ending.

When we got the news, we wept and stormed all right, but all most of us could do was crush our anger in the black silt of coffee cups. Heineman had simplified everything for everyone by taking a room at the largest hotel downtown.

"Bert, do you hear? Listen." I had to wrench my attention loose from my now immaculate plate. It was Ellie, back from her paneled basement.

"I don't hear a thing, Ellie," I said, still shaken by my involuntary spin back to the past. There was only this thick silence now, and the cry of a single bird, like the last note in a world gone barren of sound. The guy across the road had gone to lunch.

"That's what I *mean*," Ellie said. "Marv wants to finish the shelves. Thank God for the house." Clearly Ellie hadn't scourged her anger. I was tempted to console her, but right then I was more worried about Marv. I wondered if any stained rag was big enough to hold what he was feeling.

"Honestly, Bert, if he'd kept up that racket another *second*." Ellie stopped, turning something over. Then she was moving, the cupboards banging busily. When I saw what she produced, I locked my hands behind my neck, completely mystified. Brown bag, brown sugar. "Come on, Bert." Before I knew what was coming off, I was out of the breakfast nook, rattling the silverware, trailing Ellie towards the door. At the closet, she stopped to slip on her finger-tip jacket, the green suede, while I hustled into my topcoat. Then I was following her into a smoky afternoon, Ellie moving deliberately, hugging the brown bag in front of her. I felt a sudden chill, wondering what had happened to those summer gnats clustered around Ellie's Mexican lantern.

"Ellie," I called after the green suede, making my stand on the threshold. I stalled, buttoning my topcoat collar. "Think we ought to leave Marv down there alone?"

". . . all right . . . wants to be left alone . . ." That was all I heard, for Ellie hadn't turned around. I slipped my hands into my pockets and casually drifted after her.

Ellie looked around, giggled nervously, and held out her hand

toward the machine. I looked down at the treads. They were heavily caked with earth that had caught and dried around the wheels. "Ugly damn thing, isn't it?" Ellie snapped. She'd worked quickly. By the time I looked up, the gas cap behind the seat had been removed and Ellie was making a spout in the lip of the brown paper bag. I suppose I should have stopped that fine tan spume, like sweet falling sand, and I would have, too, if I hadn't seen the tears. It was no woman's crying jag, only two leaden drops on her cheek as if they'd condensed off her glasses. The earth was newly turned, soft, under my shoes. Maybe I should have entered into the spirit of the thing, returning Ellie's brittle patter, the way I'd always done whenever I'd come up to munch her Bel Paese and drink her beer before an alder fire. Maybe I should have been wondering what the cat driver's face would look like when he heard his horsy motor cough and slow, turning sluggish before it died. But I was still caught in the spin of that awful day the news broke. I couldn't help it. According to the evidence, impartially recorded in the local papers, Maury had sealed some letters, carefully shaved, removed the blade, supposedly to wash it, and crawled into bed. The hotel linen must have been spanking clean that night. I kept thinking about how tired he must have been. Then he'd put the razor to his wrist and let the blood, making of the sheets a scarlet sponge. The maid who found him next morning kept saying over and over how red the bedding was. In that last, most simple incision in the Body Politick, he'd retained his boundless courtesy. He'd left a letter for his sister in Missoula, detailed instructions for the disposition of his book, and a note that only those who knew could understand: "I've been subject to such severe fits of depression these past months that I can't believe I can go on being of service to my friends . . ."

The next day, Marv had showed up late, the snow dripping from his overshoes, his face greyer than the closing winter sky. He began reading, "Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie . . ." And broke. It's the only time I've seen Marv cry. When the quarter ended, I sold my books and got out of there fast.

Now when I felt Ellie's hand on my arm, I had to turn to hear her. I was already restive under the pain of our terrible switch

in dependency. Then I realized I'd been staring anxiously at the house. Winter was coming. The chimney was smokeless, the *coals* of last night's fire growing cold under the andirons. I wondered if any Presto log, or steady oil heat, flaring up through the vents, could ever really warm that mortared shell, that hand-laid stone.

"Bert," she said. "Don't tell Marv. About our little game? He'd be terribly cross, I know."

But it sounded hollow, like an afterthought.

George Bluestone's novel, *The Private World of Cully Powers*, will be published in July. His fiction and film criticism have appeared widely in *The Atlantic*, *Sewanee Review*, *New World Writing*, *Epoch*, etc. A former editor of *The Western Review*, he now teaches at the University of Washington. "I am trying to forget the first novel by immersion in the next," he says. "It's like trying to scratch out of jail with a pin."



Richard Emil Braun

THE LILIES

These tall lilies, color
of salmon-flesh and of big domestic-ducks' feet,
concealing the nesting-places
of the mallards at present resident,
are observed by me reproducing themselves
by means of reflection on moving
pond-water. The pond is in a park. The park is
in the city Detroit

so in spring must have been
conspicuous beyond all else to the vagrant birds
of whom those who have mated stay.
In that section of dawn homologous
to this interval of early evening
I meander here alone to watch
long shy carp approaching land to nibble roots or trash
because these animals,

from actual rivers
which are continuous with the ocean at last
and through *that* articulated
to the long legs of the unique body
of free coherent water, are confined
in the fast circular system
of a pond, and because their moustaches are in
the same style as my own are.

This is the time of summer
when black and bloody mulberries litter the sidewalks
of a few better neighborhoods
embarrassing gentle passers-by by
their suggestion of particles of flesh
left from an unimaginable
feast or a fight or action of remorse enacted
on the terraces of leaves

above, but this is my time
to be watchful and casual as every summer
when I sojourn idle in my
native city like a plantation-worker
who returns to the jungle as each season
ends and never mingles the scheduled
life of the land with the aoristic existence
of his village. Likewise

the rest of the long year
I reside perforce farther north in Michigan
and westward, a sturdy country
which on maps is more conspicuous than home.
There I am contracted annually
as a strong disciplinarian,
teaching Caesar and literature and assisting
at Bible-school if need be.

The bodies of the children
whose characters I am hired to strengthen are grotesque:
faces eruptive, extremities
disproportionate, voices stridulous.
The ensemble, ugly with cruel abrupt
asynchronous growth, cripples their minds
which I am paid to fortify by means of Caesar,
leaving them helpless before

the orphaning ravages
of that minute fraction of their number that by luck
is beautiful, beautiful beyond
the possibility of castigation.
In the spring most of the boys are gone a week.
Duty bound, I demand parents'
excuses. At first I was annoyed. *Picking rocks*
they wrote, or *Picking stones*.

What is the meaning of this?
What kind of nonsense? *They come up in the thaw is all.*
You clean the land before you can plow
is all. All over up in Michigan
and through Wisconsin rocks in heaps or heaped
into fences are visible
from the highway. Certainly discipline will be
always upheld somehow.

A cold breeze shakes the water
as evening, deepening, turns the willow border
drab. People start for home. The cheers
of the mob of the Tigers and Baltimore
at Baltimore reverberate on the pond.
These cheers are a continuity,
like a river between here and there and like lakes
in the vicinity

of stations, and as diverse
 radios tap this free flow in the atmosphere,
 like individualities
 siphoning the conjectural fountain-course
 of living Spirit, the stream is not altered,
 not diminished. In this city
 where alarm-clocks may not be bought and sold on Sunday
 peace has to be assumed

through solidarity. Now
 a woman leads a fat black longhaired-dachshund bitch
 by the chilly pond, and when wind
 frizzes her white hair and the dog fidgets
 and I smile and some scrawny boys scooter
 their bicycles closer and also
 smile, she frees her pet and immediately regrets
 having done so I think,

for while the animal
 paddles half way out and struggles with her long wet least
 and length of clothesline, the lady says
He'll be back. He's coming back, and a boy says
 That's no he. That's a she. The bitch approaches
 the islands of the pond. The mallards,
 abandoning their nests, retreat across the pond
 in order, silently.

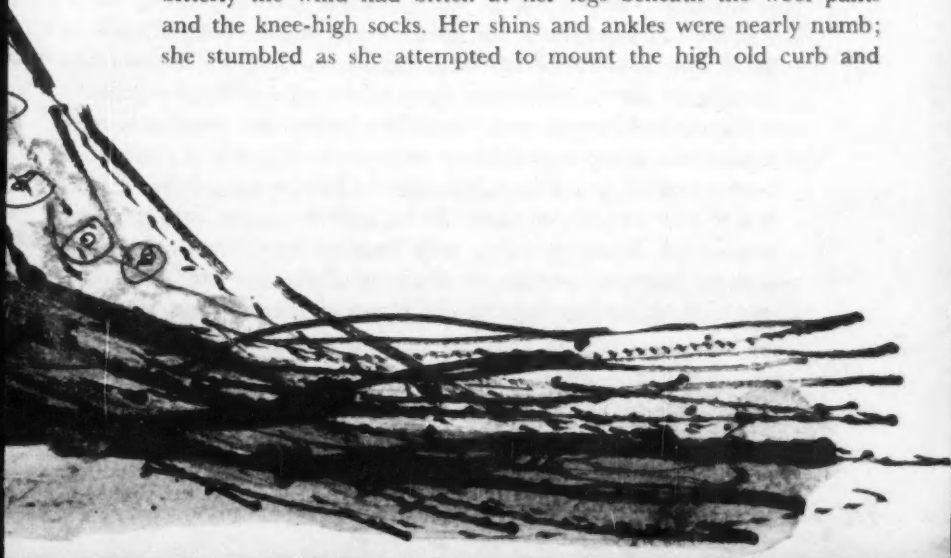
Come on. Come on. He'll come back.
 Below the high grown island bank she hesitates,
 treading water, watching the rank
 of strange tall lilies loom, sulk, twitch above her,
 till she moans and returns. *You came, didn't you?*
Didn't he? Whining, the bitch shivers
 off cold spray. A dog, tied to a bench, strangles himself
 attempting to reach her.



THE PEACOCKS OF AVIGNON

by
HARVEY SWADOS.

WITH THE WIND RIPPING at her lungs and her eyes streaming tears into the channels of her ears, Terry gunned her Vespa down the highway and onto the main streets of Avignon. It was only when at last she alighted and tried to walk casually away from this one thing in the world that was still hers, this scooter and the little valise carelessly strapped to the rear seat, that she realized how bitterly the wind had bitten at her legs beneath the wool pants and the knee-high socks. Her shins and ankles were nearly numb; she stumbled as she attempted to mount the high old curb and



would have fallen to her knees if an elderly gentleman bearing an open umbrella had not been at hand to grasp her elbow.

"*Je vous remercie, Monsieur,*" she said politely.

"*De rien,*" the old man murmured as he disappeared down the drizzly street.

It was not actually drizzling any more, although Terry had been driving through the mushy wetness for hours and hours. It had tapered off to a thick mist, the air was not cold when you stood still, and it was likely that the crest of the flood had passed and that it would be possible to drive northward to Paris without being lost on an endless detour or drowned on the low-lying Route Nationale.

The streets were alive with cyclists, the sidewalks aswarm with pedestrians raising and lowering their black wetly glittering umbrellas as they skittered in and out from under the protection of the shopkeepers' awnings. They were the first crowds Terry had seen since she had run away: the highways had been empty, empty except for the ominous water gushing along at the side of the road next to her scooter, and the villages had been blank and shuttered. She had felt like an unwanted messenger, herself stricken, bearing news of an approaching plague. But, she thought now, hadn't the plague been inside herself, and not communicable at all?

The bonging of the dozen clocks in the window of an *horlogerie* under whose awning she stood shivering aroused her to an awareness that it was noon, that the hurrying crowds had purpose, and that she too was hungry. She had had a *croissant* and coffee hours before, and it had served to get her started, but it was not fuel enough for a healthy American girl, even one sick at heart and suicidal. Terry had not been living in France long enough to forget the tomato juice, the bacon and eggs, and the toast that used to go with the coffee back home when you were setting out on an expedition.

She stuffed her gloved hands into the pockets of her zipper jacket and walked for some blocks until she came to a workingmen's cafe. There, ignoring with hauteur (and fright) the stares and the accented wisecracks, she ordered the *plat du jour* and a demi of *vin ordinaire* while she observed her yellowed reflection

in the peeling mirror behind the bar, captured for these moments between Byrrh and Pschitt! Perrier. Her face was conventionally pretty, but now particularly long-nosed and grief-stricken, beneath the cap of tight brown curls that had been her late father's too. Her legacy.

After his death eight months before from a brain tumor Terry and her mother had returned, all alone together, to the France they had known and loved when daddy had been a vice-consul in Nice and Terry herself a hoop-rolling youngster on the Promenade des Anglais, around and around the kiosks. There had been very little money, but since Terry had just graduated from high school and wanted to study art rather than go to college, Florence, her mother, had agreed that they might live together in Paris if they were very frugal. First however, there had been the Côte d'Azur for the summer, and since they could not afford Nice, they had settled in a small hillside village rather heavily populated with expatriate friends of her mother's. They were all considerably older than Terry, and much given to alcoholic fretting about the old days, so Terry spent her time either sketching the lower Alps or swimming in the sea and lying on the hot pebbles, thinking how much nicer it would all have been if daddy had only lived to come back here with them. For some reason Florence was reluctant to leave for Paris, and the summer gave way to autumn.

Florence amused herself amiably enough by studying the application of glaze to ceramics with a young potter named Jean, only son of the widow Marie Bongiovanni who came in to clean and do their laundry once a week. At sixty-three—just thirteen years older than Florence, but looking thirty years older—Marie was really an old lady, sweet-tempered and courteous, but an old lady. She had a whitening beard at the sides of her chin, her face had the color and texture of a rumpled paper bag, and she stank, stank terribly, of dried, never-washed sweat. Even though she was gentle and modest, she reeked of mortality, and Terry could not bear to stand near her for any length of time.

It was not just a cultural void which separated Florence from Marie. She was unthickened, still slim-waisted, still fresh and pretty, and sometimes when Terry passed Jean's tiny shop on her way to the beach and saw her mother's blonde head bent attentively over the potter's wheel, next to Jean's long fox-like head

with its piercing blue eyes and aggressive hooked nose, she felt as though she, at eighteen, was the worried mother and Florence, at fifty, was the vivacious young art student. Jean was big and swarthy, he had left school early and was shy and ashamed of his ignorance, his hands were always caked and stained with clay and paint, his blue and white striped sailor's jersey and denim trousers were always spotless, and he blushed when he was teased. But Terry had no intimation of what was going to happen before he and Florence went over to the next village and got married.

"I couldn't tell you about it, baby," her mother said when she returned with a scrubby corsage pinned to the left shoulder of her gabardine suit and her young husband waiting discreetly outside on the street; she tried to take her daughter in her arms but Terry squirmed away, hating herself for her inability to accept the caress passively. "You're stronger than I am. You're reasonable and logical, like your father. You would have talked me out of it. And I didn't want to be talked out of it. I wanted some beauty in my life before it's too late."

"Beauty?" Terry cried shrilly, her voice cracking. She blew her nose. "With that guy? He isn't five years older than I am. You're old enough to be his mother. Have you forgotten, you're fifty years old!"

"I know it every minute of the day. Jean knows it too. You can be reasonable, baby, but don't be cruel. Some day you'll be fifty."

"Maybe, but if I live that long I won't make a fool out of myself with a small-town gigolo who can hardly read and write."

"He is kind and sweet and gifted. Do you know what that means? And he loves me very tenderly."

"He loves your pension and your insurance, you mean."

Florence started to cry, wrackingly. "He knows we're broke. He knows all that's left is yours. He doesn't want our few dollars. We're going to Corsica for our . . . for a few days, and when we get back if you want—"

"If I want I can call him daddy, is that it? No, thanks. I'm going to Paris, and I don't want any money or advice from you or your so-called husband."

Furious, her mother turned on her savagely. "Did you want him

for yourself, is that it? Well, he wasn't interested in you, any more than your father was interested in me for the last fifteen years. Your father was a--"

"Don't mention his name to me. Don't you dare to mention his name now. I'm leaving, Florence. I think you'll be more comfortable without me."

In her little cell of a room she had thrown sweaters and underclothes into a zip-up handbag, knocking things off the bed and the walls in her haste to get out, ignoring her mother's terrible cries, "Baby, I'm sorry, baby, I couldn't help myself, baby, baby, I want you to be happy like I wasn't, all I wanted was a little happiness, a little beauty before I get to be an old woman . . ."

Now, less than a day later, her mother's voice still pursued her like the cries of the furies. It burned, the shame of it burned within her, as she thought of pathetic, foul-smelling old Marie, of her hairy-chested young son, and of the looks on the faces not of the villagers—for they took everything in stride, wars, occupations, misalliances, adulteries, what-not—but of the foreigners who had been their friends. She shuddered.

Outside the air was a little better. Terry lit a cigarette, retraced her steps to the Square, and realized suddenly that this mighty fortress of Avignon was the old papal palace of the fourteenth century. Or was it the thirteenth? As she stood on the far side of the street and gazed contemplatively across at the towering ancient battlements, lowering before her as though they guarded not heretical remnants but the abodes of the storm god whose cloudbursts were drowning this whole countryside and her own little family too, she fumbled clumsily in the back of her mind for the jumble of historical misinformation that lay tumbled about, gleaned from school courses, paperbacks, Michelin guides, and artist boyfriends. Which popes had lived there? Hadn't they traveled surreptitiously by water across the Mediterranean to and from that little town that she and Florence had visited in Spain a few months ago? Impetuously Terry strode across the Square and up the incline—which had surely been moated once—to the massive doors of the palace. She was not alone, there were many women coming and going with large bundles in their arms, and she was

taken aback when a gendarme at the very entrance accosted her and barred the way.

His belted blue uniform was immaculate, but there were smears of dried mud up and down the sides of his leather boots, and his eyes, shadowed under the bill of his cap, were smudged with weariness. For an instant Terry thought that she might have neglected to buy a historic monument ticket, or that the palace was closed during lunch hour.

"I regret, Mademoiselle," the gendarme said, politely but in a voice that was just the least bit clipped, "That this is an area of disaster thanks to the floods. There is a state of emergency and the palace is closed to tourism until further notice."

Beyond his trim shoulder through the gaping doorway, Terry caught sight of two lorries, a row of bunks ranked along the walls of the great inner courtyard, piles of medical supplies marked with crosses, and some old women eating steaming potatoes off tin plates. Then her eyes met the gendarme's, and dropped.

"I—I'm desolated," she faltered. "I did not think . . . Excuse me."

She turned and stumbled down the ramp, away from the policeman's eyes. A tourist, she thought, just a bloody tourist. Not a girl running away from home, or a girl awash in a sea of trouble, or a girl who didn't really want to go to Paris. Just a tourist—and a thoughtless stupid one.

She found herself trudging up a winding gravel path alongside one of the immense walls of the palace; it led, she observed, to the park, and although it was quite steep she allowed herself to be carried along with the throng of lunch-hour strollers. She wandered through well-tended gardens, formal to be sure, and made lusher than ever by the endless downpour, but desolate now in the raw damp with the blossoms crumbled and the leaves rotted. Up and up she mounted until she came to a plateau from which suddenly there opened a vast panorama of the Rhône valley.

The scene beneath her, as she leaned over the parapet and gazed at the countryside hundreds of meters below, was horrifying—and fascinating. The Avignon bridge seemed to be lying on the swollen waters like a stick floating on a stream. No one crossed it, much less did anyone dance on it. Black and mute on the river

that was now a horizon-stretching lake, a shallow ocean of misplaced water, it did not look as though it could ever have served for the stomping fun of the song.

Everything was very still. The water, seen from this distance, did not seem to be moving at all. It was eerie how silently and stealthily it had crept from its placid banks and worked its way across the farmlands, inundating fields, drowning cattle, leaving only gables, house peaks and spires pointing painfully to heaven. Now it lay as peaceful and apparently motionless as a mountain lake. What was missing, Terry realized, was the ominous mood music, replete with growling glissandi, with which the newsreels always embellished their aerial views of similar visitations and devastations. This was the first flood she had ever witnessed with her own eyes, but she had been prepared for something like it by the filmed records of countless similar acts of God and man, and in consequence what was the most awesome about the flood was not its unexpectedness or its lack of any parallel in her previous experience, but the stunning absence of portentous musical accompaniment, indeed of any sound at all save for the beating of her own heart.

Leaning on the back of a clammy bench with her cheeks in her hands, Terry felt that a fantastic kind of human courage must surely take life in the very teeth of these catastrophes, that vanity, fear and cowardice flourished only in the *expectation* of disaster and were replaced after it had struck by a stubborn will to go on and render life manageable no matter what stood in the path—flood, fire, pestilence or bombing. Surely the people who lived in those half-submerged houses and farmed the drowned earth were already scheming and striving to retrieve their homes and belongings and to reclaim the land for their plow and their seed, just as these people of Avignon in the very park around her munched and strolled on their lunch hour as though the waters had never risen about their neighbors on the farms around their city.

Then why is it, she wondered, that I still sit here and burn, that the fire of shame still burns in my face whenever I think of my mother? Now that it has happened, now that it is as final and real as the flood, why can't I adjust myself to the idea of my mother and that man and go ahead and make my own life? But

the truth was that she could *not* adjust herself, that she felt betrayed and soiled, that her mother and even her dead father were degraded—because she could see no sense, no order, no rationality in the awful thing her mother had done, nothing beyond a momentary upheaval of middle-aged lust like the last ugly tongue of flame in the dying fire of a collapsed house.

And then as she sat there, turning her back to the flood and facing once again the park and the people around her, Terry was startled to see two large peacocks strutting along the graveled walk. For a moment they looked like two dowagers, pursing, preening, chattering to each other as they strolled, surrounded by a retinue of pages, attendants and ogles—schoolboys, linked-arm couples, elderly women with black stockings and little scraps of bread. Suddenly one fluttered, as if aware that the strategic moment had arrived, and opened its wings wide, so wide that in that instant the world seemed blotted out in the sudden blaze of its beauty.

"Oh!" Terry cried involuntarily. "Oh, how beautiful!" Her heart was wrenched within her, and she arose gropingly to follow the birds with the others. The first peacock having displayed itself, the other now pirouetted, almost fretfully, almost as if it wanted wilfully to distract all attention from the sullen competition of the flood below, and released its great fan in a burst of radiance surpassing the first. The purple, mauve, magenta and green iridescent circles swirled before her eyes and dizzied her with the wasteful magnificence of their display. There seemed no impulse for all this dazzle, no motivation other than a vain and splendid pride.

"*Oh, maman, comme ils sont beaux!*" said a schoolboy in his still high girlish voice. His matted hair fell across his forehead, his nose ran, a heavy serviceable scarf was wound round his scrawny neck; beneath his bare and bony knees his legs and feet were encased in thick wool socks and ankle-high clodhoppers. Everything about him said farmer's son.

His mother looked old enough, it seemed to Terry, glancing at her, to be his grandmother. Her head was wrapped in a shawl which she held gathered tightly, tensely, beneath her chin; all of her shapeless body was clad in black. She had been crying, or else

the raw cold and the air smelling of flood had worked its way into her marrow and loosened her tear ducts; perhaps she had been made homeless by the seeping waters. She replied to her son, almost wonderingly, "*Ah oui, oui, pour un moment de beauté . . . Il faut avoir de la beauté.*"

Terry turned away, breathing rapidly, and began to descend by the way she had come. It is necessary to have beauty. Had she ever known that, or knowing it, had she reserved the hope and expectation of it solely for her selfish self? Still blinking from the wonder of those swaying delicate treasures opened and displayed for her delectation, Terry made her way out of the garden, to the street, and down across the Square to the P.T.T. There she stood patiently in the long queue of those waiting to send telegrams, shuffling like a somnambulist, not consciously aware of exactly what she was doing there until she had reached the wicket and held a form in her hand.

Carefully she wrote, FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME, I LOVE YOU, BE HAPPY. She handed the telegram to the man at the other side of the wicket together with a note which she took from her purse; it was only when he handed her the change and pointed to her printing with a nicotine-stained thumb that she finally raised her eyes and looked into his.

"*Votre nom, Mademoiselle.*"

"Oh yes." Terry printed her name and rechecked her mother's address. "There."

"*Mais . . . vous avez répété deux mots. Cela va vous couter—*"

"Yes, I know." With some surprise Terry listened to her own voice, as gentle as the clerk's. "I repeated it only once, because I have no more money. But to myself I must repeat it over and over, do you see?" she demanded of the puzzled man. "Over and over."

There, under the metallic afternoon sky, she mounted the scooter that would convey her, no longer burning, no longer sobbing, to her own fate, her own love, her own unknowable destiny.

Harvey Swados. Three books: *False Coin* (1960), *On The Line* (1957), *Out Went the Candle* (1955). Three children: Marco, Felice, Robin. "Our headquarters is Rockland County, N.Y., where we have lived for a dozen years, with intervals in Iowa, France, Mexico." Currently a faculty member of Sarah Lawrence College, he is "at work as always on a book, stories, and articles."

SIX POEMS OF TU FU

Translated from the Chinese by

Chao Tze-chiang



Tu Fu (716-770 A.D.) is the poet-sage of China. His poems reflect the Confucian spirit. Su Tung-p'o (1036-1101), a great poet, wrote: "The poetry of Tu Fu is the synthesis of our great poems."

Chao Tze-chiang is from Canton, China. A former professor of Kuomin University, he now teaches Chinese poetry and Lao Tzu at the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco. Currently preparing a translation and commentary on the *Book of Changes*, his last work was *Chinese Garden of Serenity*, published by Peter Pauper Press.

THE CRICKET

Little cricket,
How your sad notes move me!
Having chirped restlessly in grass roots,
You now creep beneath my bed
For mutual endearment. Can I
Who have wandered long hold back
My tears? My wife, abandoned, can hardly
Endure till morning. Your reed-pipe,
So sorrowful, and flute, so agile,
Have power to touch my heart
With Nature's music.

MY FARM HUT

My farm hut stands by the clear river's bend,
My wattled door beside the ancient road.
Grasses, deepened, obscure the acreage.
In this secluded place I am careless
About my clothes. Willow twig after twig
Grows slender, while the loquats breathe their scent
Tree by tree. Shining on cormorants,
The west sun dries their weir-covering wings.

I MOVE TO THE MOUNTAIN INN AT KUNG-AN

The south country by day is thick with fog,
The north wind roaring, the sky turning cold.
I tread by tree-tops on the perilous path.
My body distanced, I sleep at the cloud's edge.
A mountain demon blows my lantern out.
The cook says: "Night is waning." At cock-crow
I resume my journey to the inn.
Do I dare seek rest in this world of turmoil?

WALKING IN THE OUTSKIRTS

Frost and dew chill the evening dusk.
The sky lowers to the vista:
Distant smokes from salt wells rise,
Shadows on the Snow Peak slant west.
My home city is still at war;
Drums beat also in other lands.
Roaming this river town tonight,
I cry with ravens known of old.

MUSING ON THE MOON OF THE SIXTEENTH NIGHT IN AUGUST

Golden waves splash last night's lucency,
Conveying the jade-dew autumn. Border mountains
Expand, following the earth. The Milky Way
Flows near man. At the mouth of the ravine
The woodcutters, going homeward, sing.
From the lone city sorrow is roused by flutes.
The boys from Pa seem never really to sleep.
It is midnight and still they sail their boats.

THE WEST MOUNTAINS

1

The Barbarian land borders the bare peaks;
The vassal's province edges heaped snow.
Our men build walls near Pai-ti
And take corn toward blue sky.
Shu chief's deploy banners and drums;
Chiang troops send us helmets and spears.
The Southwest betrays the peace.
How bloody the spirit that haunts us!

2

Our soldiers sweat in the three towns;
They guard those far outposts in autumn.
Smoke and dust seize Huo-ching;
Rain and snow block Sung-chou.
The wind shakes the Commander's tent;
The heavens chill the Legate's robe.
The foe's camps spread on the hills.
Can I look back and not grieve?

3

Still our sons penetrate onward,
For the citadels are beleaguered.
Our steeds grow lean at Chuan-yai;
Our rice boats scarce at Kuan-kou.
Our strategists plan to quell the frontiers;
Our Marshal's victory brings awe.
The magpie makes merry this morning;
He sings of triumphant return.

Norman Thomas

SOCIALISM RECONSIDERED

SINCE WORLD WAR I, socialism has been my absorbing interest. In its service I have given time and energy at the expense of family life and of my interest in music, the theatre, and other arts. I have found deep satisfaction and rich rewards. Although I think I could have ordered my time better, I do not regret the main current of my life.

I came to socialism late—not until my early thirties—and I did not come then because I accepted Marxist dogma as an authoritative explanation of society or as an inspired pattern for social organization. I came because experience and observation had convinced me that socialism offered the best road to freedom, peace, and plenty; that it was the most promising implementation of man's desire for liberty, equality, and fraternity.

By the time of my arrival, the tremendous self-confidence of pre-war socialism was past. As a great international movement it had lost its chance to arouse the workers on both sides in order to prevent that tragically stupid carnival of destruction, World War I. It was riven at that time by passionate nationalism, and before long by the challenges of fascism and communism.

Unfortunately since 1914, socialism has not offered its intelligent advocates the refuge of a sure and detailed philosophy. The result has been that democratic socialists and their parties have become engaged—particularly since World War II—in a reconsideration of their faith and of its implementation in a human society which exists from minute to minute in fear of annihilation. (I speak of *democratic socialists* to emphasize our cleavage from communism

which, even to us non-Marxists, is not the inevitable logical fulfillment of Marxism any more than it is an expression of a valid socialism. It is more nearly a totalitarian state-capitalism administered by a dictatorship for the benefit, supposedly, of voiceless masses.)

The most obvious evidence of socialism's reappraisal by its own adherents can be seen in the lightening of their emphasis on the necessity of social ownership of all principal means of production and distribution; and in the fact that many of socialism's "immediate demands" have been put into some sort of operation within the western democracies by non-socialist parties thus narrowing the gap between their programs and ours. (Here in the United States in the thirties a great many earnest and active socialists went over to Roosevelt because they believed that his New Deal was the best way in our troubled world to attain, progressively, the objectives which they had sought in the Socialist Party.)

I, myself, am constrained to reconsider my beliefs because I am pessimistic about man's capacity to master himself with the same success that he is mastering the forces of nature. I have lost much of my confidence in man's capacity to deal with the problems of his place in a universe that is no longer as ordered in terms of human understanding as it seemed to be to generations past. But I still have hope.

I was a child of my times. I grew up in the years between 1900 and 1914 which now seem to be a singularly happy period in history. It was one that was for most of us an era of faith in human progress in an ordered universe. Our philosophical justifications of that faith, and our plans for its implementation might have been different. The Marxist might have resented the enthusiasts of the "social gospel" who essayed to find God in the cosmic process; he might have been dubious whether Jamesian pragmatism would support the comprehensive explanations of social processes that he found in the voluminous writings of his great master. But whether we were Marxist or non-Marxist, dogmatic socialist or reformer, we believed in PROGRESS. With a faith—often unconscious and scarcely formulated—that we were working with destiny toward the conquest of social and economic maladjustments of which the worst of men's crimes and sorrows were the consequence, we sought to change the evil social conditions which we found around us.

Then came the outbreak of World War I which began the disintegration of the hope of an ultimate utopia under a democratic socialist program. Even so, for some years after, it was possible to believe that the very madness and stupidity of that war would protect mankind against its recurrence. And for thousands of socialists, including myself, the Russian revolution—in spite of the faults that kept us from becoming communists—was encouraging evidence, for awhile, of the power and value of socialism even in a distorted form.

However, the years of the 20th century marched on, coming far short of fulfilling our dreams of the "century of peace." But these years have shown, at the same time, breathtaking progress in the basic physical sciences and the techniques dependent upon them, such progress as to make obviously attainable a general abundance far beyond our early socialist dreams.

But here is the paradox: the very science which seems to assure abundance in a world of diminishing natural resources, the science which to a degree has loosed us from bondage to this little planet is progressively destroying our faith in an ordered universe which we can understand. The most advanced scientists reckon with a Principle of Indeterminacy, as they should, but their explanations of the universe, as they deal with it, can no longer be communicated in words, only in mathematical symbols. Science, as Hannah Arendt brilliantly points out in her book, *The Human Condition*, is divorced from common sense.

Many of our existentialist philosophers take a grim pleasure in their insistence that man, who has now launched his own space satellite, is inescapably irrational. In this climate of thought what becomes of faith in progress? Or in democracy? Or in man's capacity within democracy to achieve not only material plenty but the peace and freedom of the socialist dream?

Men, capriciously organized into "sovereign" nations, display a completely irrational approach to the problems of obtaining abiding peace in a nuclear age. They will hate war, but at the same time they will cherish it even though they know that indulgence in it means annihilation.

I find reappraisal of my socialism necessary, too, because of the changes which have taken place in organized labor. I never acquired a mystic faith in the instinctive political wisdom of "the

workers," but I realize now, my confidence in socialism involved such an optimistic estimate. Labor unions are a necessary and valuable element in our democratic society. Organizing them and asserting their basic rights was a socialist preoccupation, and I look back with pride to our contribution to their success. But, today, with few exceptions, labor leaders, even in our progressive unions, are more overtly hostile to socialist political propaganda among their rank and file than are most employers; not for ideological reasons, but for the tactical reason of having to win the most for their organizations that they can when it comes to the division of power and profit. When McCarthyism was in evil flower, a survey showed that the failure to understand civil liberties, and the desire to reject them, dangerously characterized a larger proportion of labor's rank and file than it did of its leaders. And, today, these leaders are under suspicion and attack for conduct that is quite as amoral as that indulged in by the capitalist "robber barons" of an earlier period. A thoughtful democratic socialist cannot dispose of the significance of this fact by merely observing that these leaders are infected with the morality of a society that is still basically capitalist.

When anyone confronts me with these facts, or I face up to them in my own thinking, I usually answer that in general, since the capitalist collapse that brought on the Great Depression, considerable progress has been made in social well-being and in the moral drive toward fairer race relations. This is a fact to weight the scales of judgment on the side of hope. I say, also, that such progress has been made by the adoption of ideas and measures that were once regarded as strictly socialist. Progress, too, I say, has been made easier by the discovery—partly under the impact of war—of our technical capacity to feed, clothe, and house the poor without seriously lowering the luxurious standards of the rich. Even so, even in our wealthy nation, set in the sea of the world's poverty, the lowest two-fifths of our income receivers get *proportionately* less than they did in 1910; and as valuable as I consider John Kenneth Galbraith's book, *The Affluent Society*, I do not share his unwillingness to consider a drive to even-up this unequal situation.

At the same time I am a socialist who, in our American welfare

state, thinks that it is misleading to stress the *revolutionary* character of modern democratic socialism. There is no single basic change that we should advocate that could shatter our present social order and at the same time usher in the cooperative commonwealth of our dreams. Those dreams must be achieved by an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary policy for at least three reasons. The first: The welfare state that has already been gained makes revolution academic in raising a working class out of slavery. The second: There is no single economic track to an ultimate utopia. The third: No longer do we dare risk a large scale war.

Man need not say, as Milton's Lucifer said, "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;" but Man is certainly not Heaven nor are his limitations subject to easy political and economic removal however important are the changes of which he is capable.

In America if we were to try to make these changes with drastic suddenness, we might pay for our gains with costly disorder. Our social structure is too interdependent, too far removed from the simple life of an agricultural and handcraft society to endure that disorder very long.

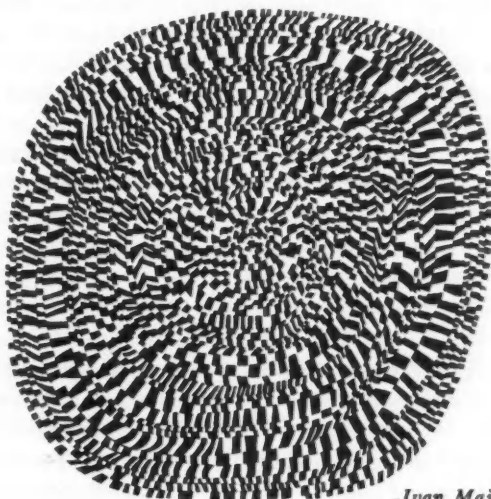
Violent or peaceful revolution would only be possible as a consequence of war—should anyone happen to survive—or of a desperate and continuing economic depression. We do not want either one; we do not want to repeat Dr. Zhivago's experience.

Socialism's great change has always been the socialization of the principle means of production and distribution. It is by this sole demand that socialism—with some inaccuracy—has been distinguished and defined. Today, this demand is being played down or omitted from the platforms of the democratic socialist parties of the Western world because governments have other means besides social ownership to effectuate their plans—such as social ownership with the government as trustee or substitute for society. This plan will be resorted to more and more throughout the world for such practical reasons as private ownership's inability to raise necessary capital or to make a profit. Even in the United States there are signs that privately owned railroads may be dumped in the government's lap.

Nevertheless, government ownership is no cure-all. There is still the human problem of management and men. As labor leaders

know, it is harder to strike against publicly owned enterprises than private ones, and the right to strike is one much cherished.

And there is a danger in piling *everything* on the government. We need variety and competition in service, if not in price, to encourage initiative. The government could well be overloaded even if it organized its enterprises like TVA rather than like the Post Office Department. (The TVA type of administration of nationalized industries with more specific representation of workers' authority, has long been preferred by American socialists.) And



Ivan Majdrakoff

for private corporations, a combination of the Stick and the Carrot—regulation and subsidies such as now abound—plus proper taxation will keep their owners in line. All this must enter into socialist thinking.

In this article I am not trying to draw up a detailed socialist program (for Democrats and Republicans to appropriate piece-meal). If I were, I would argue that moral and practical considerations point to an extension of public ownership of natural resources and of basic and essential industries such as steel. In the oligopoly of steel it would be easier to deal with administered prices and the wage-price-profit spiral when the managers no longer had to consider owners' profits as so vital an item. As for

natural resources, there may be reasons for allowing private corporations to compete, for instance, in the searching out, extraction, and marketing of oil with appropriate remuneration, but there is no moral or rational excuse for its private ownership. And I insist that the rental value of land apart from improvements is a social creation and should be taken by the state in a tax thus ending one of the worst forms of exploitation in our society.

As for labor—it was reasonable for Marxists in the time of the master to see a revolutionary force in the mass of workers, and in their emancipation, the outstanding condition of a better society. We are confronted now—especially in the United States—with a situation very different indeed. By its own efforts and by the technology of abundance, labor has acquired—within a capitalist society whose sturdiest pillars are socialist ideas—a security and status that no one could have dreamt of in 1848, the year of the Communist Manifesto. Members of organized labor can hardly be described any longer as “slaves” or “prisoners of starvation.” In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt puts the matter this way: “The workers today are no longer outside society; they are its members, and they are jobholders like everybody else. The political significance of the labor movement is now the same as that of everybody else; the time is past when, as for nearly a hundred years, it could represent the people as a whole.”

Though winning the workers is still, of course, vitally important to socialist success, any concept of democracy—socialist or non-socialist—which puts its trust in the instinctive wisdom of the “workers,” the “common man,” the “proletariat,” would be dangerously inadequate in a society in which machines under automation perform—and will perform more and more—the work of producing our life necessities. Socialism must make its most valid plea to the interests of *all* men as consumers, and as lovers of peace and freedom. Government should be by an informal minority (dare we call it elite?) functioning under democratic controls, and comprised of leaders in labor (Walter Reuther style, not Jimmy Hoffa style), management, science, education, the arts, etc. Neither race, creed, color, nor riches derived from private ownership should be allowed, automatically, to give title to membership. This informal elite should try, diligently, to increase respect for individual freedom and dignity. It should give each man the education of which he is capable. It should give industrial workers more repre-

sentation in the government of their industries. It should try to solve the problem of providing employment in an age of advancing automation. It should face the problem of enriching leisure, and of achieving a balance between goods and services. And most of all, in order to even conceive of an earthly paradise in which men will no longer be alienated from themselves, their fellows, or their world, such a socialist democracy must formulate a program to avert World War III and assure abiding peace.

As Paul-Henri Spaak has said—understandably: The thing that “socialists have nationalized best is socialism.” Yet, in spite of its failure in World War I, much of socialism’s international spirit, hope, and fellowship remains. We must find a way to give that international fellowship new power and definite meaning *now*. Some progress must be made *now*. Holding its ideal as a torch, inspiring devotion on the march, international socialism must lead men out of the jungle *now*.

Communism, that perversion of socialism, for all its cruelty, its denial of freedom, its failure to be a force for peace, has shown an astonishing ability in the Soviet Union and China to achieve progress in industry, sanitation, and education without resorting solely to the taskmaster’s whip. And Walter Lippman, no socialist, has insisted that the alternative to communism in India and southern Asia must be some kind of democratic socialism. The same thing will prove true in other countries. These are international socialism’s greatest challenges. If these challenges are not taken up *now*, the negative alternative is clear—and it should be clear to any political, social, or economic movement that is worth anything at all: A peace, such as we dubiously enjoy, dependent upon a balance of terror is bound, sooner or later, to break.

In tackling its problems, socialism should not be content to make minimum changes in old formulas: it should face the current situation with the spirit of the physicists whose respect for Newton’s laws led them to approach new facts with the same imaginative understanding that Newton, himself, exercised when approaching the available knowledge of his time. Socialism needs a scientific method and spirit, but the day will never come, I hope, when the social sciences can be reduced to mathematical formulas or their conclusions tested by controlled laboratory experiments. That would mean to individual men the loss of any freedom save

as a tragic illusion. If, in any degree, men are *really* free, the Principle of Indeterminancy must loom forever large in human affairs.

In my reconsideration I am more concerned with socialism as a philosophy than as a political platform on which to seek electoral support. If that philosophy is to speak to man's present condition, it cannot simply repeat with assured faith the formulas of its Marxist or Fabian pioneers any more than its opponents can fall back on their classical economies and 19th century political theory. (I am wryly amused to hear the same men, who told me twenty-five years ago that only free enterprise capitalism could produce and distribute a growing volume of material goods, now complain plaintively, "How can you expect our production increase to match the Russians when the state over there can act with real authority according to plan?" Socialism, of course, must not content itself with saying *tu quoque*.)

We all, everyone of us, individually and as members of parties, movements, or any alliance of thought and spirit, have some hard thinking to do; and to that thinking, socialism—which has escaped the perversions of communism—brings a great treasure in its ideals and its hope for mankind. And, despite the failure of its overconfident hopes, it brings a record of great achievement. Despite its internationalist theory, it has been impotent, thus far, against the monster of total war; but its boldest critic cannot look at the tremendous gains of the workers since 1848 and affirm that these gains would have been achieved without the passion, the vision, the devotion of thousands in every land to whom socialism gave meaning and purpose in life. Socialism, today, is no more to be rejected than is democracy; socialism, ideally, was and still is the highest expression of that democracy.

Today, when we cannot be sure of inevitable democratic progress toward an attainable future, we have all the more reason to bet our very lives against inevitable catastrophe in total war, or against the slow rot of humanity in an underfed and overpopulated world.

Norman Thomas has often been called the "conscience of America." Six times Socialist Party candidate for the President of the United States and twice candidate for Mayor of New York, he is an active advocate for civil liberties and civil rights. His most recent publications are *Test of Freedom* (1954) and *Prerequisites for Peace* (1959).

John Frederick Nims

THE MIRROR

High holiday: the castle lank with banners
Swam like pagodas streamered undersea.
In gaudy gloom, rough honeycomb the casement;
Chink and rathole flash orfèvrerie.
By barbican or moat, in bramble shambling
The zany with his glittering smithereen,
Cutting the palm that fondles it—but catching
Cerise, cerulean, amber, grecian-green.

A hulker in the pitiless briar, a chuckler
Scuffing irascible honeybees of light.
The mirror shoots and cools. A briny iris
—Wandering wildfire of the outer night—
Cozily winks: a porcupine, that castle,
Spiny with fires that ravish and derange.
Lips flitter to the moon a rainbow spittle.
Cloudy as turning worlds the great eyes change:

Green with the misty liturgy, pale satin;
Roan where hairy forearms bang the board;
Quince with the leman fingers stealing thighward;
Gold where the black dwarf hunches—lo the lord!
Sheet-lighting eye, beard caracul as thunder,
Palms flickering dispensation, flaring wide
From twin tornado of purple sleeves; enthroned like
Genii of weather on the great divide.

The lord of rule and misrule, of the revels:
Outrager of fable in the sacred wood.
His image storms the oriels like voltage,
A maelstrom in the critter's pool of blood.
Who heard the one cry splintered among starlight?
Saw the moon-creature slump forevermore?
Not the fiesta-folk, whose dapper ceiling
Mirrors the ceiling mirrored in the floor.

When currents stir, and the blond soul of candles
Flee without giving ground, as dancers go,
When gusts in the wild arras plague the hunter,
His brow set deadly on the golden doe—
Only the weather eye avails up-current,
Sails by a ringlet drenched, a foundering light,
Home to that broken oak, to timbers giving
Under the weight of silence and the night.

Virginia Zabriskie

PORTFOLIO OF AMERICAN DRAWINGS

THE SELECTION of drawings which follows gives us a portrait of the modern art world. The portfolio is not so much an attempt to display the rich body of black-and-white work that exists in this country today, as it is a presentation of some recent and important trends.

The first part of this century saw drawings of our journalistic draftsmen—Luks, Sloan, Coleman, Shinn and Henri—rendering the city street, the back alley and the immigrant. American artists of the twenties turned their attention to the architectural, the mechanical and the industrial. The “avant-garde” of this decade were the cubist realists. Clean lines and crisp surfaces marked the drawings of Sheeler, Spencer and Demuth. Toward the end of the twenties, satirical and emotional social protest became the subject of American draftsmen. After the Second World War, a new tendency in drawing emerged. The black-and-white paintings of Kline, de Kooning and Pollack provided stimulus. Out of all this has come the kind of drawings you see in the pages that follow.

Perhaps the one word that unifies these is versatility—most important, conceptual versatility. The idea of executing a drawing is amazingly flexible. In method, image and emphasis, contemporary disregard for traditional limitations is demonstrated. To focus, therefore, on any one school or style of drawing is to misinterpret the present scene.

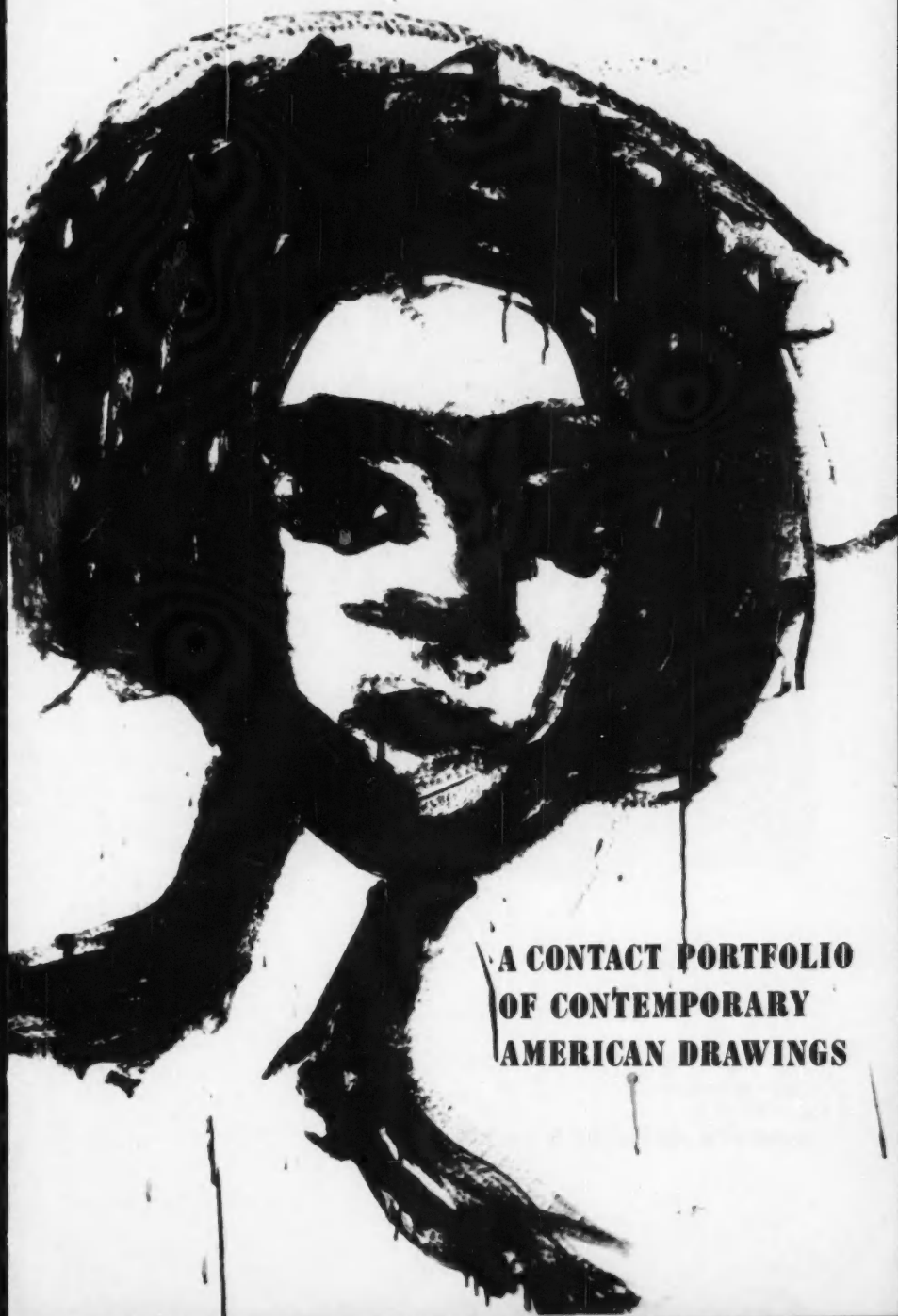
In the drawings of the "abstract expressionists" the primary impact is one of form rather than line. In such drawings line becomes area, and drawing approaches the domain of painting. Lester Johnson, a figurative painter, uses a brush loaded with oil and his direct drawings have the same aspect as his painting. De Niro's charcoal drawings, like Johnson's, are a major phase of his work. His charcoal portrait has the rapidity and vigor that marks his painting style. Pace and Goodnough display this same painterly feeling in their drawings. William Gambini's drawing has a touch which is delicate. At the same time there are other artists of this school who do not want to draw lest they inhibit the free flow of sensation released in the act of painting.

The linear quality which has long been associated with traditional drawings is seen in the work of other young artists. Pearlstein's mass of rock is delicate and subtle. Longo's drawings, inspired by Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, is not connected with his painting but is considered for its own visual possibilities. Grippi's intricate maze of abstract figure forms has the freedom of a sketch and the density of a finished work. These ink drawings, figurative or abstract, are conceived with a deliberateness of hand and mind.

Drawings have always served the traditional function as preparation for painting and sculpture. George Cohen's sketch for a painting is a unique translation of the human image as this artist sees it. Like John's simple visual symbol of the American flag, Cohen uses these images in his canvases. "Working drawings" such as these afford the viewer an intimate glance into a more complex projected work.

West Coast artists like Zajac and Jones offer highly finished drawings which are the equivalent of paintings. These drawings with their dark grounds have a finality of their own. The strong romantic tradition of some American art can be seen in these works.

Bultman, Graham, Milder and Bell offer still different styles and attitudes. To this portfolio, sixteen other drawings could be added, as varied and vital as those that were selected. To appraise each drawing separately is to understand the multiple problems that confront American artists. American drawing is diversified and lively and each artist draws as his own personal expression demands.



**A CONTACT PORTFOLIO
OF CONTEMPORARY
AMERICAN DRAWINGS**



ROBERT DE NIRO
Bathers
Collection of Mr. M.J. Stewart

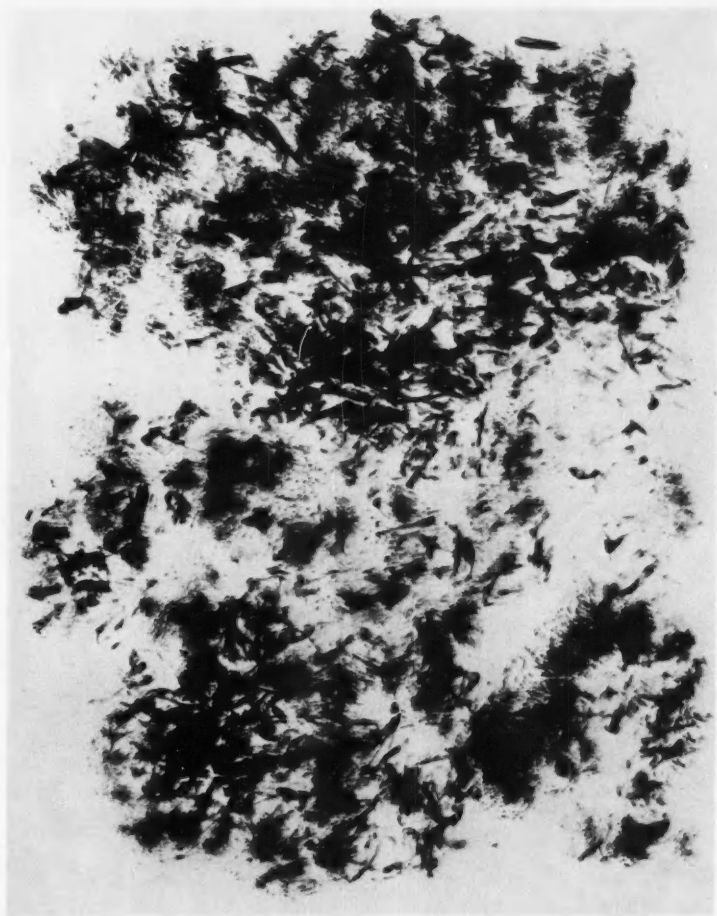
Title page:
LESTER JOHNSON
Portrait of Jo
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. B. Van Kleeck



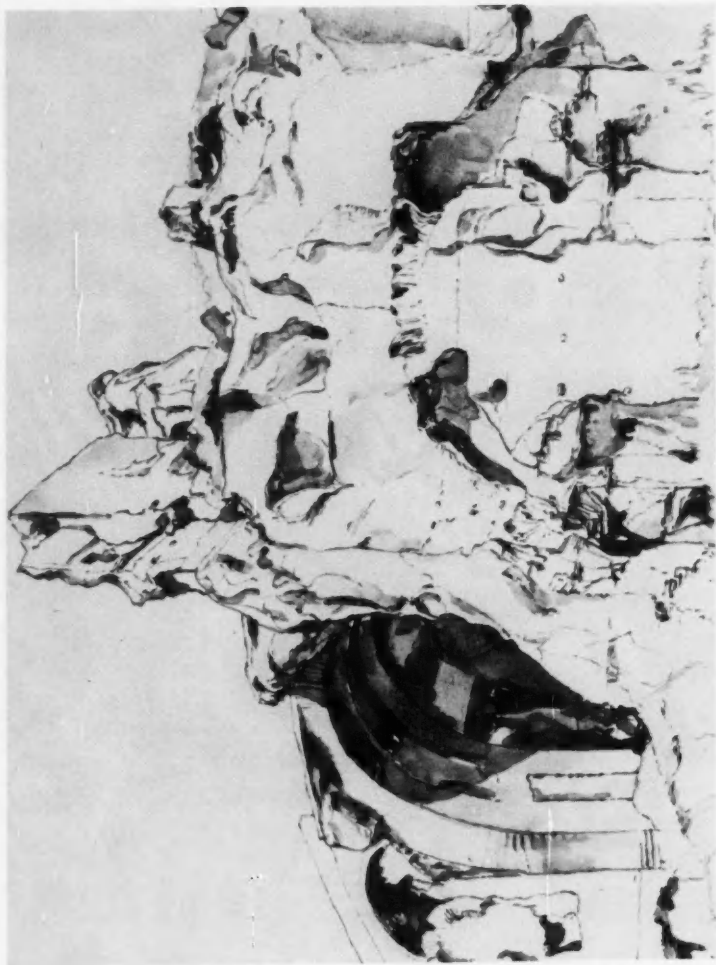
STEPHEN PACE
untitled
Howard Wise Gallery



ROBERT GOODNOUGH
Figure
Tibor de Nagy Gallery



WILLIAM GAMBINI
Black-and-white ink drawing
Collection of the artist



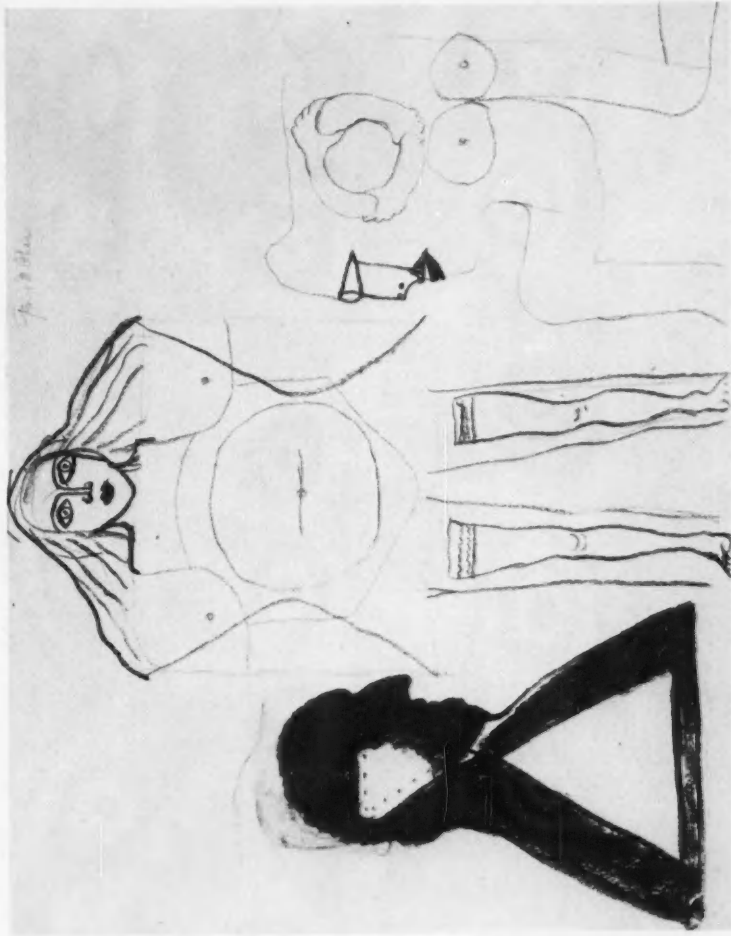
PHILIP PEARLSTEIN
untitled
Peridot Gallery



VINCENT LONGO
untitled
Collection of the artist

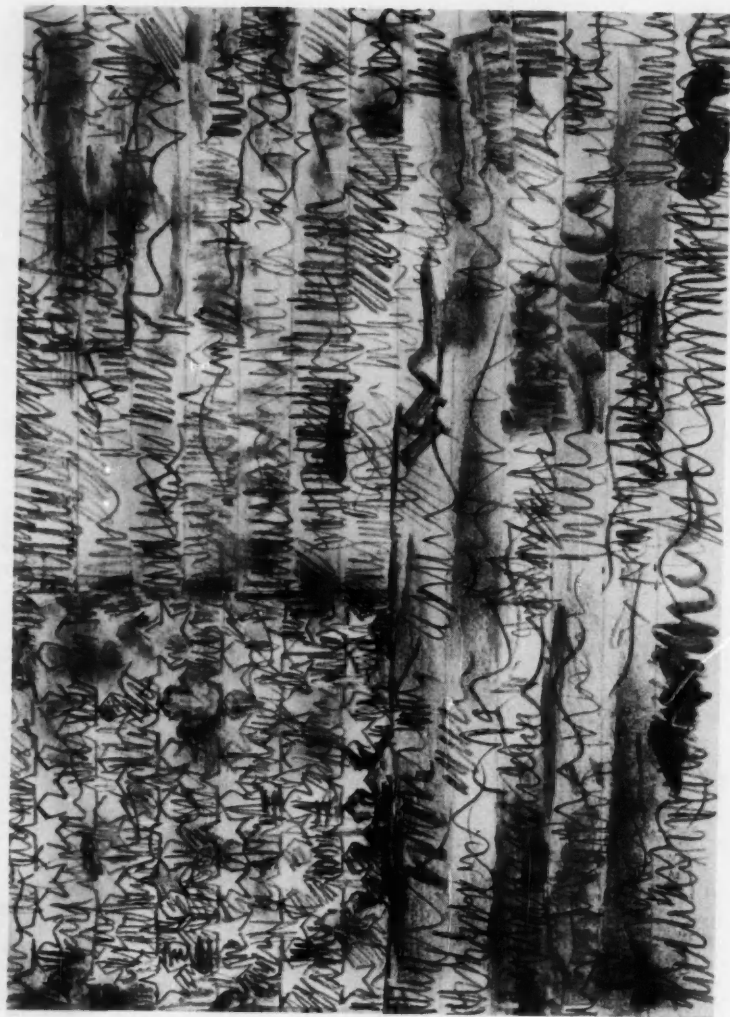


SALVATORE GRIPPI
untitled
Collection of the artist



GEORGE COHEN
untitled
Richard Feigen Gallery

JASPER JOHNS
Flag
Collection of
Mr. Leo Castelli





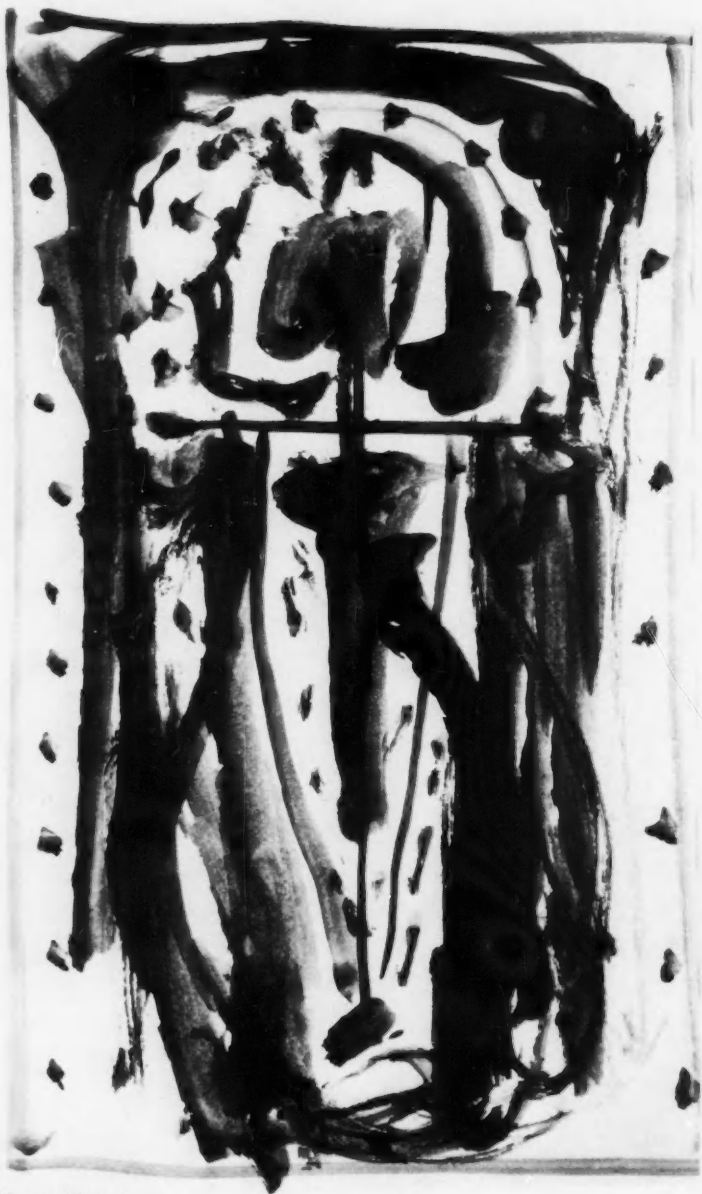
JACK ZAJAC
Prayer
Felix Landau Gallery



JOHN PAUL JONES
Boy
Felix Landau Gallery



FRITZ BULTMAN
from "Clarissa"
Mayer Gallery



JOHN GRAHAM
untitled
Collection of the artist



JAY MILDER
Chair
Collection of the artist



LELAND BELL
The Maison Tellier
Zabriskie Gallery

I.

No One is Perfect—Donald Duck is a Jew—A Better Bargaining
Position—Out of His Life???

THE ONE WAS, nevertheless, quite pretty and the day had been an unseasonably clear and brisk one. In fact, the day had been a delight. In Chinatown Rudolph had spied a lovely Oriental (Chinese?) standing behind a richly polished counter and from her he had purchased a dried squid, a small one, sealed in cellophane.

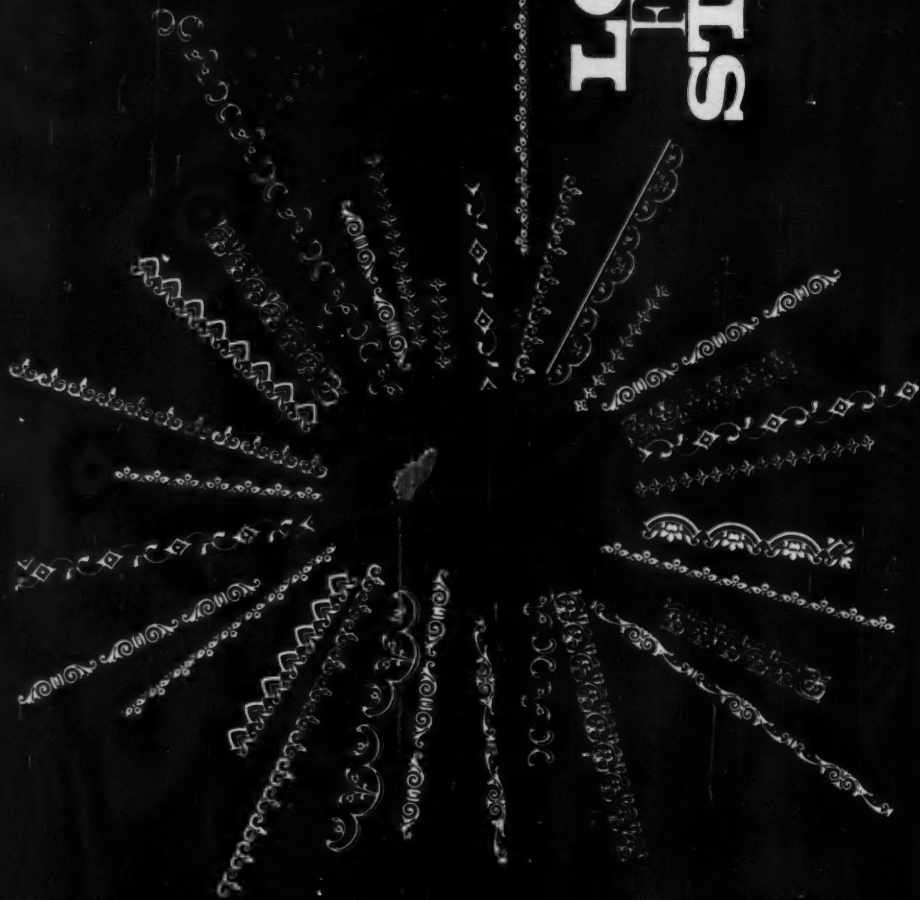
"God a'mighty," he had heard someone say a few hours later. He had taken his fish back and traded it for a bag of almond cookies. Which he ate voraciously. It was finally near dusk.

Narrow through the shoulders she had sweet breasts that hung like plums beneath the mint-green rayon. Her legs were round in the calves and full. They tapered to ankles worthy of the pastel stocking ads that grace the curved roofs of the Municipal Railway Coaches—albeit her legs were bare. She was one of the most beautiful women Rudolph had ever seen, of course. The voice that issued through her long and waxen nose was not unlike that of a candy-gluttled child, who, for some secret reason (perhaps belly-ache) considers himself sorely put upon. No one is perfect.

But she wore ballet slippers; these brought the Wahoo to Rudolph's heart. For where the first and second toes plumply met, then curved beneath the leather, there was a lovely divide, a delicious cleft. This reminded him of what must lay, in wait, beneath that lucky skirt.

Already he felt a little out of his own clutches. He sighed one of Relief—a loud whoosh that drew nary stare nor the coy breeze of a fluttered, blue eyelash. *His* grey pupils, light as ash on the dull

LOOKING FOR A LITTLE STRANGE



whites, saw through a film that belied his years. The eyes of a twitching schoolboy beamed to the teasing bosom of a young "ma'arm"; longing for the X-ray vision of Clark Kent: a boyhood hero.

At best Rudolph half-saw, and, half-seeing, he was blandly content. Such must be the best way then, he would have thought; had he been the type that carries a good feeling to an attic-conclusion, by way of extensive attic-work. He was extremely unmuddled, however. His thoughts, as they were, were circular in form. A tiny ring.

He leaned toward those sensuous toes that seemed so to beckon. A trick of the darkling room and a slight foot-movement cast a furry shadow between them. Wahoo. But the girl was too quick for him. She pivoted on the leatherette, and his head thudded against the *chrome* leg. He was dazed, wounded; he bled a little on the concrete floor.

The Girl had a Big Laugh on him—thus revealing to Rudolph an unsightly imperfection: silver braces. These banished, for the briefest time imaginable, all lust for toes, etc.

But when she asked him, finally, just what the hell he had been staring at for the past twenty minutes, Rudolph uttered hoarsely: "A charming miniature." This phrase, long rehearsed in park and bathroom, had finally entered the atmosphere of our Earth. But to no avail. It remained as before and the girl, utterly bored, walked away to stand by the gay Wurlitzer. It was dim. Pete had not plugged it in for several weeks.

Rudolph chose the stool the girl had just vacated. He squiggled around on it a bit, to get comfortable. He thought of the time he had spent rehearsing his phrase, and decided that actions speak

louder than words. Still, he was a slave to certain habits; and, cannot rehearsal be joy and comfort?

She had not come alone.

From ballet slippers to sturdy, black health shoes is quite a comedown in the land of the aery footfall, but our hero steeled himself and asked this girl if her sweet little toes were ailing. To say such things made him feel terribly disgusted, for he did not want the reputation of the smartass. So he was glad that she paid him no mind—missing in his joy the essential contradiction: that is, he should have been plunged into early evening gloom by the gross inattention. After all, wasn't he human?

Still, he was happy. He drank a large mouthful of the sparkling beer and even snickered in a bold manner, through his nose, chewing the thick lower lip.

She had been talking all this time to the only other person in the bar: Pete Baruno, Entrepreneur; who had been singing all this time quite loudly; whose nostalgic air knew no interruption. Pete had no teeth and rubber-mouthed his native tongue. His songs he made up as he progressed through an endless gradation of maudlin emotions. He could improvise for hours. It was said that many jazz musicians came to Pete for inspiration.

Plum-breasts was kicking the gay Wurlitzer. Finally she pushed a clearly marked, but poorly situated, button; her quarter was returned to her. Through the handy mirror behind the bar Rudolph regarded her intently regarding the girl at his right hand; who intently regarded Pete Baruno, Entrepreneur; who intently, if abstractly, regarded his customers as a vast audience at the Opera House.

And so four people, lost together in the overwhelming spirit of camaraderie indigenous to the bars of San Francisco (indeed of the World) sat engrossed in each other, paying each other not the slightest bit of attention.

Pete had come to the sad part. He was wiping his broken-veined cheeks with a partially stiff and yellowed handkerchief. He had transported himself to his fifth and favorite year; to the scratch of his mother's black shawl against his screwed up, whimpering face; to the steerage of that foggy ship hooting and straining forever away from that brilliantly colored post-card scotch-taped to the more brilliant cash-register.

Rudolph rubbed the seven-haired chin that so frightened prospective employers. Let it be said that he was disgustingly fat.

Pete suddenly crammed the handkerchief into his serge coat. In a rhythm that double-timed the dirge he sang, he snatched the pearl fedora from his head. The hair shot out like a milkweed blossom. The hat he held over a sherry-filled cup, over his heart. He had come to the pleading part and his dewy eyes blazed.

The girl talked on, a little more excitedly. One could not help but feel the fervor of Pete's song. She was not speaking English.

Rudolph tried to think of Pete, for he loved him as the yokel loves the suave pimp. However, his eyes kept straying to the apple-ass of the girl staring into the dim, gay Wurlitzer. Had his eyes been steady . . .

Good Old Pete. He had kept a huge house in Los Angeles in the days when bathrooms also reeked of working spirits. And in this house were three pale "sisters." In a great pink-sheeted bed the four of them had cuddled and romped. When the sun shone the girls had to stay indoors, for black, even dark girls, have no souls. The girls said to one another: "Is this the way it should be? Maybe where we shoulda gone is *South America*." They did not say this in English. Instead of immigrating they had a friend of questionable ethics forge them each citizenship papers. When these were in hand they had ventured out to exercise their Right.

Then Boom. Like that the wops had to go to work. It was all over for them. They cursed the government whose wisdom the sons of the pioneers wept with joy to hear. (Included among these latter, in spirit, were the three "sisters." Stealing half Pete's tainted money they emigrated to Malibu. There each married a gentleman "connected with the movies." During W.W. II each was sent a white pennant from the government, with a gold star blazing on its face. The sons had enlisted in a body upon meeting their step-fathers.)

Pete went to Fresno to pick peaches with the other folks, who, for one reason or another, were also darkies.

The very night Pete received his first coin for several lugs of the fuzzy fruit, a certain gentleman (having belatedly taken advantage of the government's decree), within his legal rights, leapt upon our hero's mother with great hue and cry. Nov. 3, 1934. Rudolph knew this for a fact. Both Pete Baruno, Entrepreneur, and Mother had mentioned specific dates.

Rudolph, who was at this moment clapping wildly as Pete bowed behind the bar, was not dumb to the charms of that elderly gentleman's present ladylove. Who was a white-haired Negress, but spoke fluent Italian and claimed to be Filipino. Time shatters principle. You got to live.

Our hero had thought long and wicked thoughts concerning this lady (who had looked at him once—*last* week). Her skin had that fine satin sheen. Especially during the past few days had he thought of her; while he was alone in the park, under a tongueless tree, looking for work, and/or in the evenings at home with his benevolent "roomie" Mary Jane McNamara.

Whomever she was talking to, the health-shod girl had a voice that surged up from somewhere deep in her soft and softly wrinkled throat. Perhaps 45, thought Rudolph—although she could not have been a day past 30. His desire for older women was partly Oedipal, but, alas, mostly economical. He believed that older women realize the depreciated value of their commodity, and perhaps did not hold it so dear. To quibble was very distasteful to our hero.

And her "R's" (o, the lovely sound on them) rolled up from somewhere below the root of that scarlet tongue.

Rudolph imagined that member to be secretly strong; capable of nondangerous violence—his favorite kind, albeit a rare bird indeed.

He interrupted her. "Do you happen to be French?" He wondered. Thinking: in France the whites marry the blacks. What matter such trivia as shoes? (A wise nod here.) Or, for that matter, a little corpulence, more or less? (Here his head bobbed quickly).

"Oh God!" Exclaimed the girl whose breasts were succulent fruit. "Here it comes. The Old Crap. Why can't they leave you alone, Georgie? Keep an eye on that one. He'll make a dive for your crotch. He did for mine . . . Why, I'll tell you . . ." She went on in this vein, not speaking to the girl Georgette, but through the handy mirror behind the bar, while her friend was slowly explaining to the attentive Rudolph that no, she was Svedish, and that many males mistook her for a Frog—Especially Greengo Peegs. Finishing her cautious detail of facts past and present she fixed a mackerel stare somewhere in the vicinity of our hero's uvula.

This made him feel conscious of his belly, which was hanging

over his belt somewhat. Is this why she *fixed* him, like the gypsies of old?

Or (perhaps, but he could not remember—as you cannot remember that last breath) was it that he had greeted her first word with a stump-toothed, gummy smile: a little habit he was trying to overcome by sheer will. He began to fidget and scratch his thigh, his hand in his pocket. He was not able to think of anything sensible to say, nor to staunchly meet the passive gaze.

"Aha!" He shouted into the utter stillness. "Then you must be German. I thought of that too, you see." He continued a little less loudly, having received a malign glance from Pete. "San Francisco is very cosmopolitan." (He had just read this somewhere.) "I would never have thought you were German, though. You look so . . . so . . ." He was about to say "kind" when it occurred to him that she had said "Svedish." "Well, well." He trailed off. "Imagine that." He reached for the lovely, symmetrical, amber bottle.

He had lantern jaws.

Reaching for the potatoes, Mary Jane McNamara had said: "My, such Strong Jaws."

Like a swift sledgehammer his smallish fist had lit soundlessly and with great force of purpose (wild-eyed) on top of her roundish head. Just yesterday. She had cried like a baby. He had felt, with a glow of pride that strangely stole his appetite, akin to his pioneer ancestors, his Germanic peers. But while he was blindly glowing she had slipped some salt into his milk.

"German, my ass!" Cried the lovely child by the gay Wurlitzer. She had found the plug and was now searching lustfully for a socket to stick it into.

"I am . . ."

His late wife had often . . . NO. Sometimes. Maybe just once or twice or never laughed at the shape of his jaws with great derision.

". . . Svedish."

Or ha, ha, hee, hee, hee, Maybe this wild Svede bitch has a sort of periscopic vision (upside down). Nothing is impossible. Maybe she's staring at the hoo, hoo, hoo, at the old LUMP. WA-HOO! He was beside himself, and nearly fell off the high stool again.

She was saying that she was Svedish again. And that she hailed from Oslo. She guttered out the half-heard words. Rudolph's features had taken on a warm glow.

But then he thought in a quick peek that he caught the tail end of a grin on her *thin* lips, and he became moody. He drank, disdainful of whose money bought his beer, and ordered another in a loud voice. Pete was snoring on a stool behind the bar. One could only see the top of his hat, which was tilted toward his brown tie.

She would come home tonight and find him not there, he vowed. "Out Studding again, eh?" She would sob through righteous tears. This thought did not change our hero's mood, as it was not a new one.

"Sure, I'm a wop." Pete shouted from some great distance, rousing himself and immediately beginning to grumble.

"I'M OFTEN ASKED THAT TOO!" The girl shouted, ranking our hero, for he did not like surprises of that sort.

Would nothing happen? Again? He decided to ape her stare. And did a bang-up job of it. But success ruined him, as it has so many an interpretive artist. He ad-libbed a grin.

Our hero said to himself: "Oh, what the hell. I shall go nuts if she doesn't stop picking on me." He decided to "shock her out of her health shoes."

"I HAVE TO PISS LIKE EVERYTHING!"

"You know where it is, silly." Giggled the girl by the gay Wur-litzer, whose innards were warmly glowing. The voice was not her own. She had obviously read the line in a cheap novel, or heard it just so intoned in a good film.

Still fixed on his uvula.

Rudolph excused himself in a gentlemanly fashion. It was all he could do under the circumstances, for no one loves a poor loser. He made his way to the sanctuary of the yellow closet.

Once there he found that he really did have to piss. He did that, but neither realization nor act did the *spiritual* side of him any good, which was at this time at a decidedly low ebb.

His eye fell guiltily on an inscription over the bumwad that read: "More than two shakes," etc. There were many funny things written on the wall too, and these helped somewhat to revive his

joie de vivre. Also some puzzling things of political, social, and philosophic nature. One epigram, that had been meticulously done in felt-pen, read: DONALD DUCK IS A JEW.

Hmmm.

It suddenly occurred to our hero that the Oslo in Sveden must be no more than a small town, or village; for isn't there a capital in Norway that goes by the same name? Hmmm.

When he came back into the bar proper, (the w.c. being in the back room) he noticed in one sweeping glance that Pete was sitting in a chair that blocked the doorway, shaking his head and clucking at the powerful machines that had begun to ease up Grant. The girls were cleaved together in a clench-fisted lip-lock. "Great Scott!" ejaculated our hero. (A phrase not heard since childhood.) For not only had he been sheltered as Boy, but as Aftermath as well. This was the first time he had seen Lesbian and friend in action—although he had read several sophisticated novels. The pretty toed one, who had been "on top", snapped back her wanton head and cried: "Oh, here we go again, Georgette. Here comes the Old Crap." Georgette's eyes were screwed shut and her mouth made a rapid series of silent moues—not unlike those of a stimulated sand-dollar.

"Now, don't try to start anything, Buddy-boy," said the girl through her nose, in a voice obviously not her own.

Our hero wasn't about to. He sat down at a table near the rear of the building, after apologizing at length.

Pete broke wind. Poot. This set Rudolph into a gale of hysterical laughter. He was some time quelling it. Then he went back to the perusal of his nails.

However, he did peek a few times in a sophisticated manner, but soon the girls became self-conscious and withdrew. Pete pinched each on the apple-ass as they squeezed past his chair. And called: "Gooda Nocha, ladies," as they skittered across the street. Somehow he made this simple pleasantry sound lewd. How in the world? Our hero wondered admiringly.

Out of his life forever?

He was wont to leave, but had reason not to. He decided to await further amazing occurrences. Especially that of the entrance of Pete's black and silver ladylove.

He made a mental note to not forget the two girls, but something upstairs tried to erase it. He even sat back and tried to think of them then and there, but found in his mind only the Great Saturday Thirst. It had been a long week. He asked for another beer, shaking off the shiver that accompanied the counting out of money.

He sometimes read the newspapers and now remembered that there had been a youthful Nazi group uncovered in a plush college in Marin county recently. He wondered if it had been one of those students who had brought his felt-pen across the Golden Gate, and, skulking into Pete's place sometime around two a.m., had written the epigram on the wall. Did they burn comic books on the weekends? (He wondered in the manner of the popular "sick" comedian, reviling himself, again.) Did they wear arm bands? And black shirts? And even march in close drill? And with all this, wonder of wonders, still manage to keep up with their homework?

A young man with a red sweater with a V neck with a bare and hairless chest showing smoothly, with high cheekbones, stood outside the door until Pete slowly moved, and then ambled in—with the gawkward grace of a colt. As this occurred Rudolph was wondering "What it all means?" Meaning: as early as it is barely eight, I should worry. The evening is young, the adage concerning Rome, the one concerning good things and waiting, etc.

II.

Our Hero Thinks in the Manner of the Guide-Book—The Plight of One Red Indian—Some Tears!!!

Fags poor Rudolph had seen aplenty. His late wife had gone to a junior college in her extreme youth and had convinced him (she had pointed it out in print) that: "A fag-beater and a fag are brothers, under the skin." (For the life of him our hero could not remember whether the book had been a psychology text or one written by a left-wing historian-sociologist.) In his reckless teens Rudolph and his friends (o, where are you now, came a flash with a tear) had kept themselves in pin money by pummelling and rolling fags in and around their hometown: Hollywood, Calif. This sport was somewhat distasteful, but ever a sanctioned one.

Now, with his new knowledge, he thought not of the past at all and looked upon his brethren with anxious equanimity.

This young man seated himself directly in Rudolph's line of vision. He had to move the stool some three or four inches to do so, but did it with such grace and ease and unawareness that our hero marveled at his facility—as one marvels at an armless man typing with great speed in a newsreel.

With some shame Rudolph thought in the manner of the guide-book: "If the fag in question considers herself strikingly sensitive, and/or boylike in appearance, grace, and demeanor, he will invariably cross her legs and present to his sudden hero a sensitive profile, an arched wrist, the sensuous symmetry of smoke waving and fading from the glowing cigarette."

This young fag looked like a horseless, forever, nomad: stuck in a desert of time-halted (maybe a precocious 16) till death. Like a daughter of Geronimo with his hair cut short, intrusted by veterans to pass unharmed (because of unbosomed youth) across the golden mesas—a message in her secret pocket: words for the other side. A gelding, raised by mares. A well-stocked corral. He had a classic Injun nose; was dark (Apache) and wore fetching bangs in the Roman style. Rudolph stared in the wonder of too-long contemplation. Snake and sparrow. What was it?

Suddenly, with no provocation from the attic, his bird gave a little hop.

Let it be said that our hero was endowed with a visual imagination of Todd-A-O dimension and clarity. Over which he had no control. He was momentarily fascinated by his secret sight, and felt another twitch—up the thigh to the next highest branch: straining to sing. Then repelled. (Do they—ugh—KISS?) And the bird died, but unmourned and to rise again. He wondered at Truth as the time slipped by and the fag glancingly pinned him and Pete through the handy mirror behind the bar. He wondered, for Enlightenment should follow Puzzlement, as Science has taught us. He pondered his choices and thought he was on pretty barren ground, but he persevered. He chose the two girls. First all three in a great pink-sheeted bed. Then one. Then the other. He could fight out the lethargy that follows a screw. Perpetual motion. Double assertion. "Psychodrama!" rang in his inner ear—a message from the grave.

Thinking such thoughts his grin grew, but his vision shortened. A movement brought back focus. At last the Red Indian was approaching.

Our hero assumed his newly learned Svedish stare, and at best half-saw. "Sit." Another hop. "And tell me your story." The Indian glanced down ruefully as he passed on to the yellow closet.

It had not occurred to Rudolph that perhaps the gentleman had a previous engagement. That perhaps he could *afford* a rueful stare. It still did not.

Our hero was crushed. He said to himself: "What does it all mean?" Meaning: somebody loves me, the town is full of folks.

He got another beer, plus one glass of burgundy wine. He mixed these and drank deeply. In High School they had called this mixture Jesus Juice. He giggled nostalgically, although he had not invented the nomenclature.

Rudolph waited for several minutes, but the Indian—who Pete insisted ("Lissen, you son-a-bitch Fat") was a waiter at "dat Fokin' pansy Greek joint"—did not return, nor did anyone else come in. Pete had begun to talk to our hero in spluttering Italian, hovering over him; not seated, but bent, like a short, moulting penguin might look searching the snow for ants, if penguins ate ants, etc.

When Pete spoke Italian to American uni-linguists these latter invariably made *uneasy*. The elderly entrepreneur would begin to daub at his dry cheeks with the sallow handkerchief, which was never very dry (due to a sinus condition). This action put more or less tears on the cheeks to slowly coagulate there, to be scraped off of a morning with a straight razor; which Pete kept in the cash register, in case of thieves.

Rudolph rose to leave, but, as we have said before, had reason to not like the idea.

North Beach, the section of San Francisco wherein our little story takes place, was aswarm with sailors.

(Our hero had read about North Beach in one of the local newspapers. The columnist had said that : "First young people are funny-looking, then they become poets, painters and bums. This can of course be statistically proved, Mr. and Mrs. San Francisco, but you can prove it to yourself—and have a gay mad time doing so! And without the boring aid of dry statistics. Hie Ye to North

Beach . . ." Reading this our hero had found that area on the map. And, in a manner of speaking, had hied himself thence.)

This morning's paper had read:

WELCOME TO OUR CITY

*Welcome to San Francisco the—Fleet.
We're proud to "have
you aboard . . ."*

The meat of the article had been in the last of the three paragraphs. A suggestion to the travel-weary mariners to visit No. Beach, if they were in the mood for some real San Francisco excitement. Something to "tell the folks back home" about.

Our hero, as has previously been stated, was a slave to certain habits. He had to come for it was Saturday.

And even though Pete Baruno, Entrepreneur, discouraged all uniformed men from his bar by turning on the gay Wurlitzer, the radio and singing to boot, Rudolph had to leave.

The last tear had been of a singularly disgusting hue.

"Some tears!" Our hero muttered as he stepped onto the sidewalk.

III.

Rudolph Takes a Short Walk—Thinks of Rattlesnakes—A Solemn Vow, Taken This Morning . . .

"What does it all mean?" Rudolph had lived in San Francisco for three years and had only (sob) one friend: Mary Jane McNamara. She called him "Rudy" sometimes. Probably because he was so unhealthily fat, Rudolph conjectured, qualifying both previous thoughts.

"What in the world does it *mean*?" He asked himself anew as he approached a blue-lit doorway, through which filtered thumping ukuleles and the ethnic yodeling of The Islands—emitted from the gay Wurlitzer within. "What . . .?" (Do not think for a moment that our hero cared what it meant, gentle reader. He had read the phrase in a cheap novel, or heard it at a foreign movie house. His question was only a method of bringing up past thoughts.) At the moment he was referring to his 24 years, to his white skin, to fate and fat, to himself: a warehouseman out of work for three months—but *not on vacation*. His dear, young wife had passed on

three years ago, on a birthday outing: His. She was the victim of a harrassed rattlesnake at the foot of the steel-grey Yuba Buttes. "What does it mean?" (In bored and maudlin tone). He had grieved truly for his wife—in more ways than one. He had especially wondered what her passing on had meant. "She was so young," etc.

Still dreamed of it all. It was frightening. Last night he had clutched Mary Jane McNamara in his joyous sleep—that time in the drive-in movie. She, dreaming again the blow he had so unfairly dealt her (considering size and weight), had elbowed him in the paunch. His dream had taken a turn for the worse: that time under an army blanket on the "deserted" beach. He had felt low this morning. Vowing to get a job by Monday night or do away with himself. Perhaps (this had perked him up a bit) by Greyhound Bus.

IV.

Run Home, Sammy And Warn Your Leetle Mammy That
The Fleet's In. Again.

In this bar, new to his weekly wanderings, our hero was joyed to see that there were no sailors at all. Not one.

The bar was dark, full of mahogany and real palms. There was a miniature war canoe on the brilliant cash register. The lady facing him was a lovely one: an Hawaiian hybrid of the number one class. Perhaps 55, thought our hero.

Rudolph ordered a Lucky Lager from this fine lady and wondered how many times he had passed her by. (Let it be belatedly said that his beer-ordering was an exceedingly surly one.) The music was soothing and the beer bottle chill to the touch. AAAAH, he sighed. Causing the lady to lift a graphite eyebrow.

A clutch of people, arm in arm when possible, passed by the door, proving it to themselves. A few, who would have believed anything, peered in at our hero. Then they went on.

Rudolph was watching the barmaid surreptitiously as she moved away; seeing from the corner of his little grey eye. His randy nose imagined the pungent odor arising from his or her private parts. The Life, thought he. This is indeed the Life. Rudolph's gaze especially imagined that it was following her breasts; which were heavy and full and which (he had "noticed" the few moments

she stood directly in front of him, hand out palm up) bulged softly even beyond the downward plane of her body—tawny at neck and bare arm, beneath that white blouse, that black skirt.

His late wife had been amply endowed, though childless. Mary Jane McNamara, a boy from the navel up. And how, you ask, had their life gone of late?

Where did you look *today*? Honey.

Why, just everywhere, dear. Got a blister on my heel.

Any leads? Honey?

Nothing much, I guess. WHAT'S THIS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE? TAMALES? TAMALES! FOURNIGHTSRUNNINGTAMALES! JESUS GOD!

Well—if you aren't working. It's going to be hard. Honey.

Throw it up in my face. Go on. (Sulks)

I thought I saw you in the park today. Honey?

Park? What park? Park? Well, come on. Pass it over.

I went to the park at Lunch Time With a Friend, and . . .

Who with, goddamnit. Huh?

(Hee, Hee.) What difference does that . . . ?

Who with? Huh? Who with?

Oh (sigh) with Myrna.

(Whew) Myrna? (A Big Laugh here) She's crosseyed as all hell. Ha. Ha. You and Myrna.

I SAW YOU UNDER A TREE. Honey.

Now, how in the world could I be in the park when I was . . .

Forget it. Eat. We'll race . . .

Very funny, Miss Mansfield.

. . . Honey.

Rudolph, on this Saturday evening of July 18, 1959, was looking for a little strange: a little heavy-titted strange. Mary Jane McNamara was looking for a little thin strange. They had begun this convention soon after Rudolph had been laid off his last job. On Sunday mornings they lied to each other, tortured each other with exploits really imaginative or imaginatively real, fought, thought, fucked, then (misgivings cleansed away) argued anew. So the cycle ran. A tiny ring. The trouble was that it had begun to bore them. In the papers there is either a great deal of money (hush or alimony) involved, or a murder.

Knowing these facts, which are hardly worth relating, can you wonder that our hero surreptitiously followed this Hawaiian matron's every supple move through a lid-flickering, half-seeing eye?

A sailor found him. Rudolph groaned softly, for he too had once been possessor of the thirteen button pants.

Of pacific, cowardly nature, he had had to grovel his way through. Adeptness does not always instill pride, contrary to popular belief.

"Huh!" The sailor snorted. Money is scarce, thought Rudolph. He gripped the nearly full bottle courageously. He found to his surprise that he was seeing things a little awkwardly—and it was scarcely ten o'clock. Every time the cash register tinkled it seemed that the oars in the little canoe moved. Hmmm.

Rudolph turned to see a great, plaid ass bending toward him from the gay Wurlitzer, which was clickingly swallowing quarters. Soon that music that so delights our teen-agers filled the air, and the huge ass turned ponderously, replaced now by a grand, glittering smile. "Welcome aboard!" Shouted the smile through its teeth. "I was a Gold Star Mother!" on and on. Was this, our hero wondered vaguely, the opposite of the long-faced Swede? He would never know. Once on the leatherette the huge ass grinned fiercely, never moved an inch.

V.

Our Hero Utters a Maxim—I'm a Handsome Man—A Personal Dragon—People Like to Watch Such Things . . .

No sooner had Rudolph pulled a package of cigarettes (a mentholated variety) from his pocket than the sailor thrust a Camel under his nose and said viciously: "Nobody but a fuckin' queeah would smoke them fuckin' Vicks cigareets."

Our hero took the butt, winced a little after the fact (as one does before a latrine) and lit two from one match.

"What in *Cheerist* sake are you grinnin' at, bud?" Demanded the sailor.

(A charming miniature? NO!)

In a real pinch Rudolph's memory wasn't half bad. "Nothin' in California but queers and hot-rods." He said, feeling the great ship roll beneath his feet. "And I don't see no wheels on *him*." He pointed to an elderly Portuguese gentleman who was sitting where

the mahogany curved, sipping wine, watching the barmaid, dreaming of The Islands. The sailor guffawed and said brightly: "No sheeut, man. You just ain't asheetin'."

They sat in silence: friends, not needing to talk.

The sailor then began drinking shots, then doubles, with his beer. Old Overholt was the brand, but he called it "Old Overcoat," which put the lady at the end of the bar in stitches, every time. "Go get 'em, sailor." She cried through her teeth.

Rudolph had taken to calling the barmaid "Honey" in a raspy voice as he ordered his Lucky Lagers. She smiled, (she had a gold tooth), but wouldn't talk. She would only take his money, and smile.

It is impossible to drink beer seriously and not smoke along with the game, as a certain dogma implies. The urge to do that became unbearable in time and our hero courageously laid his green pack upon the dark wood, and waited for a Camel. But none came. Instead a snort. Rudolph shrugged his shoulders and lit up. The sailor snorted again. No longer friends, there was nothing to say.

"You wont to know somethin', buddeh?" The sailor drawled in a menacing tone. "Ah'm the fuckin' light-heavy chaymp of the fuckin' Pacific Fleet."

"Well, fancy that." Rudolph said, for lack of anything better. Three more came in to sit at the chaymp's right hand.

"Yeyus, fayncy thayut!" The sailor mocked, snorting.

"Go get 'em Sailor!"

The new members of the—Fleet were regarding our hero with some malice, but there was no obstruction between him and the door. In the doorway, however, a small party had paused; the eyes of which were busy accustoming themselves to the gloom within. The sailor's voice twanged resonance; it barreled out to them.

"Boy howdy," said Rudolph to the glaring chaymp. "I bet you really got the reach on those guys. You must be six foot two." It is well to live without scars.

"REACH, SHEEUT!" The chaymp said, then snorted while his comrades echoed: "REACH, SHEEUT!"

"Ah got the fuckin' PUNCH!"

". . . the FUCKIN' PUNCH!" Echoed the others, including a wee voice from the doorway.

"I . . . well . . . I . . . was just never much good at sports." Our hero whined piteously. His throat caught on the last word.

"Why, hell, no, man. Yoah too goddam fayut." The sailors, and several others, had a Big Laugh.

To chug-a-lug ice cold beer, out of a bottle was impossible; to waste that which is not thine, a sin. He grasped the Lucky Lager courageously, cursing himself for ordering it.

"Ah said yoah so fuckin' fayut you probly half to feel for yoah fuckin' deeuck."

The situation was getting quite personal. As is usually the case, even the most stupid *sensed* this; silence, of course, reigned.

Rudolph, in his acute anxiety, discovered another treasure in the back of his mind. "Two hundred pounds of dynamite with a two inch fuse." He said to the sailor, with a tinge of disgust in his voice, but not an apparent tinge.

The chaymp repeated the joke in a grandly, rollicking voice. For a few minutes the bar and a small portion of San Francisco's historic streets and sidewalks were a veritable chaos of laughter. Our hero felt not the slightest touch of Pride for having given the gift of laughter. While he sat there, to all appearances the most humble comedian in the world, joy rang through the air, and he sweated profusely.

"Aloha," thought our hero, for so had he named the barmaid. "I really should leave." She showed her gold tooth as the chaymp repeated the joke.

"When ah git in the fuckin' rang," the chaymp began. "Ah fight fahr and squahr. I ah figger a filler cain't whip me, why sheeut, ah just don't hit so hord."

Rudolph, whose nails could stand cleaning, realized that he was being spoken to.

"Sheeut, ah ain't been whipped but twict—and both a them was a couple a hopped up nigras."

The last drop dropped upon our hero's tongue. Imagine a dog marking off the Sahara. The sailor rolled up his cuff. There was an embroidered dragon on the underside: green and scarlet. Rudolph too had been to Japan. You can get a lot there, he mused nostalgically, and cheap, too.

"Ah nevah git pissed til they go for ma fayce. Then ah see

reyed!" He had wrists the size and color of oaken two by fours. "Ah'm a handsome man, man. Ah ain't gonna have ma fuckin' fayce fucked up by no fuckin' nigra or no fuckin' anybody else. GIT ME? Ah ain't gon' give them the fuckin' *chaynce!*" So saying he thumped our hero's acned chest with a steel forefinger.

"Go get 'em, Sailor-boy . . . Honey!"

"Nobody but a fayut little fuckin' queeah-boy would smoke them fuckin' men-toe-latumed cigareets. What in *Cheerist* sake are you grinnin' at?"

The party at the door gaily parted in deference to our hero's white-faced flight. He couldn't see the curb, however, and, having gauged his steps for sidewalk level, sprawled on his face near the center of Grant Avenue. Luckily, there was a lull in the traffic and no powerful machines bore down upon him, or upon the people that the ruckus had drawn.

No one helped him up. Thank God for that, thought Rudolph, for had anyone it would surely have been a cop—in or out of uniform. He decided that he was drunk and staggered away before the crowd had completely dispersed itself—"feeling his oats," as it were.

That's a good place to stay away from, he decided, when the Fleet's in.

VI.

At Last—Disguises are In Order—Boorishly Drunk—Such a Run!!!

In a few minutes our hero was standing in an alley, thinking of what it all means, and pissing on a dusky brick wall. A beam of light arrowed down the alley from the far end. It passed over Rudolph's midsection—did a double take—and for a moment had him full in the wide (for such close-set) eyes. He heard slow moving tires squelch on the cobbled street when the beam was cut off by a blackened building. Then the car's gear-box chunked into retrogress and Rudolph bounded into an apartment building, whose door was conveniently opened. He closed it behind him.

"At last," he said, with the same solemn smile one sees on the faces of foreign patriots, facing a firing squad, in *Life* magazine. "Action." A tremble at the lips.

But none was forthcoming. The two policemen who were in

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But none was forthcoming. The two policemen who were in

that car *were not policemen at all*. They were bold imposters in rented uniforms, looking for reeling "criminals," especially young and comely ones. In Wash. D.C. these two had had a fine time as crew-cut F.B.I. men; until a civil servant had perished in a fit at the sight, and aftermath, of their flashed badges.

"Aw, shit," our hero muttered after a half-hour's standing in a musty closet. During the last twenty minutes of this time he had passed from feeling sorry for himself to worse. He stepped into the chill alley air slowly, slumped over, feeling "as old as the hills." (He said this to himself twice.)

It was colder out than usual. It was very cold. It was unnaturally cold. It was . . . Well, what in the world! Rudolph, in his steely awaiting, had forgotten to button his fly, forgotten to cage his bird. "Aha!" He cried. "It's not as bad as all *that*." And he galloped toward the street.

"Whee!" He shouted, not convincingly, buttoning his fly. "Whee!"

A neon sign. Turn right. Into the bar, through it to the men's where he suddenly felt *funny*. He washed his face with the cold water and tried to dry it standing before a hot-air machine. This made him feel even funnier, and, as a result, he vomited a little.

The atmosphere of the bar was extremely peaceful and soberly rich. Young men sat at the sombre mahogany, an empty stool between each, gazing into mixed drinks. The lights of the gay Wurlitzer were softly muted oranges and pinks, instead of greens and reds. Must be a custom job, our hero mused admiringly.

He thought then that a disguise might be in order. In case those "policemen" were on the look-out for him. He began by ordering a martini. "A martoonney, please." He said.

"Goin' out for a late supper-dance, Smiley?"

He sat in sophisticated silence; arching his eyebrows periodically at the periodic thoughts one thinks when he arches his eyebrows, sitting alone in a sophisticated manner, thinking those thoughts, quietly drinking a martini.

There was a slight draft. The doors were naturally opened. Rudolph reached past the man at his left. He took a stylish soft-crowned derby that proved to be a mite too large, and put it on.

"Here, fella." Said the man peevishly. "Give that back."

Rudolph did not deign to answer him. The hat had given him a new slant on life.

"Give that back now, fella. I don't want you hair oil all over my sweat-band. Give it me." If a dug-dragging cocker spaniel could speak so would she sound, thought our hero.

Our hero fixed him with a stare. The man was very small, with a huge head and peeling nose and scaly blonde hair. Rudolph made a face of utter disdain and held onto the derby with one hand. He drank with the other.

He muttered to the diminutive man: "Nobody but a fuckin' queah would wear a . . ." but fortunately caught himself in time.

The man's face took on an expression of quick, kick-me fear. Which gave our hero a sense of power. But he was not the largest man in the bar.

"Here now. Give me that hat. I say friend; that is mine, you know."

"Bartender!" Rudolph called. He made a motion with his head, hand and thumb that means: "Throw this obnoxious bastard out, please."

Mumbles at our hero's right hand.

"All right, funny guy." The bartender growled. (As the little man smiled.) You wouldn't growl like that at Chaymp, thought Rudolph angrily.

"How's about you give the little guy his lid?"

Rudolph made as if to go.

"One step, bud." Said the uncouth barman. "And I drop you where you stand." These words were spoken lowly, so as to not arouse the contemplative customers. Our hero was already on his way out.

The barman's threat was an empty one, but the little man thought highly of his derby hat and gave chase. After one block of broken-field running—on the one hand very sloppy, but determined; on the other a veritable swivel-hippedness, but whose sideways always movement greatly hindered forward progress—the small man came upon Rudolph. He was sitting on the curbstone puffing.

Our hero admired the wee man's spunk and gave him the derby hat, along with the offer of his companionship for the term of a

beer or so. This latter offer was warily accepted.

Rudolph did not believe the little man would be served, for he appeared to be boorishly drunk. No sooner had they entered the door of Pete's place than he let a great fart. Several intense college students with beards, one of whom had been playing a zither and singing, clapped wildly and hollered, too. Some square college students at another table gave a locomotive for Big Head. Soon the two groups forgot the object of their oral applause and began to compete, shouting for anything.

"Such a run!" Gaspd the little man, smiling innocuously. "It has left me flatulent." They seated themselves at the bar and paid the raucous students no mind. Their attention was not missed.

VII.

Do You Want to Shake Hands??? The Dark Flame—
A Mere Initiate . . .

"Your name, sir?"

"Rudolph Druff," our hero truthfully replied.

"Mine is Jacques Schart."

"Hmmm."

They sat in silence, etc. Rudolph let Jacques pay for the beers. The bar was crowded and a small party grouped at the door to listen to the intense students sing. The black and silver flame was not there to warm Pete. He stood despondently by the gay Wur-litzer, mumbling Italian. The patrons served themselves, much to their delight. "Put da loot in da sing." Pete yelled periodically, but in a half-assed manner.

Mr. Jacques Schart would not shut his mouth. Our hero began to feel *depressed*. He was wondering what it all meant. Glancing toward the doorway he thought he saw a lip curling in a smile. This made him *moody*. He was annoyed and said to the talkative Mr. Schart: "What do you want to do, buddy. Shake hands or something?"

"Why, no, friend." Said Mr. Jacques Schart smoothly. "As I was just explaining: 'We do not believe in this. We think that to shake hands is meaningless. What we believe is this. We should shake cocks. This has Meaning. After all . . .'" But he did not finish his sentence. Our hero, thinking suddenly of the children that he hoped someday to sire, etc.; was outraged. He smashed the little

man in the mouth. This was his first blood. It gave him a sense of power. The crowd within and the group without gasped. Then there were murmurs of assent as the college students helped Mr. Jacques Schart out the door. He sprawled near the center of Grant Avenue.

There are not words to express our hero's feelings after he stepped back inside, dusting his hands. Rather imagine his standing before a circus mirror that shew him as he might truly have been, had he the ambition to enroll in one of the many Vic Tanny gymnasiums.

And when Pete's dark flame arrived do not think our hero paused for consideration. He walked manfully to her stool and made a singularly disgusting proposal to the ears of one long past menopause. She struck him full in the face with an oath and a heavy bag, in which was an alarm clock and a fortune in small change.

The crowd, which had grown larger since the Big Fight, let up a cheer and our hero found himself again on the way out. This time he did not fall. He had learned his lesson.

His light-footedness was not appreciated. Several hissed through their teeth. The loudest of these near-whistles came from the pursed lips of Mr. Jacques Schart. One gentleman went so far as to try to push Rudolph to the pavement. But a strong voice rang out: "Nobody but a fuckin' queeah would push around a little ole fat boy like thayut." Our hero was saved the effort of picking himself up again. The voice of his savior so emboldened Rudolph that *he pushed his way through the crowd.*

He made an illuminating discovery.

As he forced his way between a group of gaily chattering younger marrieds, he copped—the first was purely innocent, purely accidental—several furtive feels. "Wahoo!" flickered behind his downcast eyes. His thick lips twitched toward grin.

For the rest of the evening (until two a.m.) our hero sought out groups of people in tight clusters and enjoyed himself heartily copping feels therefrom. He received for his little efforts only one playful punch on the shoulder.

He found that he was bisexual as far as this sport went. Had he not been a mere initiate he would have known that the joy lies in the copping, not the feeling. But he *was* a mere initiate, and so was the victim of many recurring, delicious pangs of guilt.

VIII.

Well??? Rudolph Utters Another Maxim—I Happen to Know
Your Jacques Schart—Now He's Got Her—One In the Mixer.

At two a.m. the lights went out. At that moment Rudolph had been winding his way through a group of folks who were standing in front of a coffee-house window. Each and every one(discounting our hero) wore an expression of extreme pain—as one is wont to wear when an execrable dessert demolishes the memory of a fine meal. For the B-----s within (under the tutorage of an advertising agency and sworn to absolute secrecy) had donned the most fashionable of clothing, shaved, combed the hair, and so forth, at precisely fifteen minutes till two. The object was that they be as a bad dessert, etc.

This advertising agency was in the employ of a group of experimental psychologists, which was in the employ of a certain mad capitalist; whose intention was to find a means by which he could get the folk's mind away from the B - - - scourge and back onto a certain brand of peanut butter. In short, that worthy was a peace-monger.

Then the lights went out. The crowd fell apart, through its own volition, as quickly and humbly as if someone had cut a ghastly silencer at its very nucleus. (That someone being our hero.)

Rudolph trudged up several of the several hills, passed the ex-homes of the ex-money barons (whose chimneys now were smokeless) without so much as a look. And so did he pass through various of the valleys; all on his way home. He sang a few of the songs that he had heard on the gay Wurlitzers that evening. They were mostly love songs. If that's all there is, he thought, that's what you got to sing.

His home was a cellar apartment. Mary Jane McNamara was in the wide bed asleep. Her thumb-nails were brown with a singularly bitter-tasting medicant. Her clothes lay in a wanton heap on top of the refrigerator, which hummed like a million friendly crickets.

She woke up with a start, staring into the light that Rudolph had turned on.

"WELL?" He said, as he heard her turn to gaze up at him. (His head being in the refrigerator.)

"Well?"

"Did you get any?" Our hero was tired, and dispensed with the usual formalities.

"No. But Nearly." She said.

"Me too. *Damn* near."

"I don't care."

"Me neither."

She was sitting up in bed. The sheet over her flat chest just somewhat resembled a white gown of the finest silk imaginable.

"What's that in your pocket? That . . . that . . . That LUMP?"

"Home is where the hard is. Oh. I thought. I mean . . . PUT ON YOUR CLOTHES, QUICK!"

She did, quickly. Rudolph made her put on her shoes. He disrobed. She took off his brogans in a fit of passion and kissed his feet. This gave him a sense of power. He threw himself upon her, ripping the old clothing she had so sensibly put on. With great hue and cry he sprayed his saltseed in that furry and dessicant fruit. All the time screaming goat-gee and watching over his soft shoulder her little-bittie toes. Wahoo.

"Do you love me?" He gasped, near death after five seconds work.

"You're on top." She replied, in a voice obviously not her own.

He began, in that moment he should have been fighting off the lethargy, etc., to tell of how he had almost whipped the chaymp. He was very careful all the while, and for at least two obvious reasons, not to look her in the eye. She began to quiver angrily; a fish half in water.

She said, in a voice that drawled disdain, that she had come within an inch of screwing a rich *millionaire*.

"What's his name?" Our hero sullenly inquired.

"Oh," said our heroine, with all the blandness of the confident child-liar, "Mr. Jacques Schart."

"Ha. Ha." Roared Rudolph with relief and glee. "Ha. Ha."

"He has very Lean Jaws, and says he can go all night." Said Mary Jane McNamara. She was not at all pleased with the reception her news had met.

"Ha. Ha." Repeated our hero, albeit in a somewhat forced tone.

"Hee. Hee." He certainly had her now.

"I happen to know your Jacques Schart." Said Rudolph pontifically. "He is a pervert who would have us nod our private parts at one another by way of greeting. On the street and in Broad Daylight!"

"Oh!" Exclaimed Mary Jane McNamara. She stared at the light bulb, and then at the place in the darkness where it had been.

"I seem to finally have your number, Miss Queer Lover."

So saying our hero fell into a deep slumber. But Mary Jane McNamara did not sleep all night; in the morning her face was drawn and pale.

"Hmmm." Said Rudolph. "Hmmm." Still, he was a slave to certain habits.

However, in a few weeks it was discovered that she had one in the mixer. The two of them (Rudolph and she) were summarily wed.

EPILOGUE

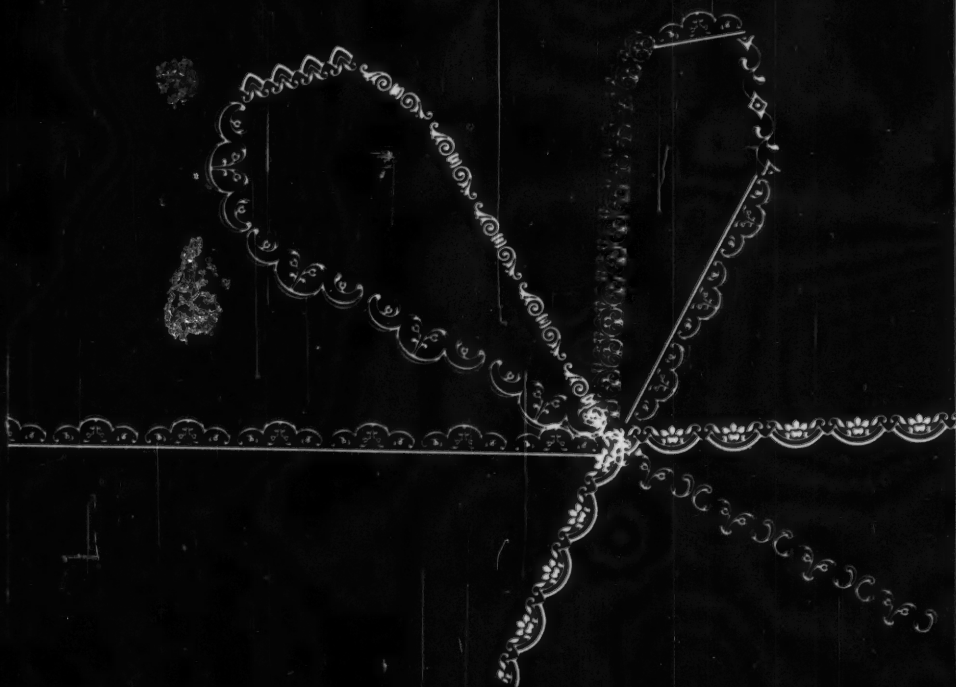
Do not think for a moment that Rudolph's unemployment was anything but temporary. Nor try to imagine the air of solemn glee that pervaded that humble cellar apartment one Saturday evening as the three of them sat together gazing raptly at a fine, new, blue perambulator. Each thinking his separate thoughts.

Our hero did not lose weight, but the pregnancy of Mary Jane (nee McNamara) did not do her profile "any harm," as the phrase goes.

But there were drab times to come. Oh yes, there were drab days, but there were a few drab little moments. Yes, there were, gentle reader, a few drabs to come. And seldom (never, in fact) but did these come without a mild, then milder, then mildest little mouse-light *surprise* as Spectre Vanguard. Yes, they came and, yes, they went. And then, here came another . . .

But, and this can almost go without saying, everyone, but everyone, got *older*; until each was, one moment apiece, *as old as he could get*.

e N d



TOTAL SATIRE

"Drive the car He drives."



—from *Telegraph Hill* by Jerry Stoll

Ralph J. Gleason

THE COMEDY OF DISSENT

FLEEING—PERHAPS INSTINCTIVELY, from the goofball of television with its tranquilizer and benzedrine mixture of entertainment and violence and from the blandness of the theater and the motion picture ("integration is commercial"*) and the irresistible object: immovable force stalemate of nuclear power—an adventuresome segment of the American public is finding social dissent in night clubs under the guise of comedy.

A generation raised in the dead-pan politics of Senator McCarthy—in which *Time* and *The Saturday Evening Post* could be accused of seditious liberalism—might well have lost its sense of humor like Joyce his Faith.

Apparently the bomb had done what the Dachau furnaces could not—take away the ability to see anything with humor.

Nothing seemed really funny and yet it was all funny in a grotesque way, a situation which the *Saturday Evening Post* cartoon, the TV joke teller and the supper club quip-maker could not survive. The bomb and the Senator threw into the tight focus of reality all of the trivial laugh impulses of the American public and disenfranchised the Lambs Club clowns (for all except the riders of the

* Hollywood agent to leader of a folk song group; names on request.

modern WPA expense account train) and paved the way for the satire that is making a total assault on our culture, mores, taboos and stereotypes in the night clubs of jazz.

Even then, though, it was beginning. Mort Sahl, an angry young college student began a series of devastating attacks on McCarthy, Nixon and the Eisenhower era (just as during Coolidge's time, Mencken and others sharpened the shaft) but Sahl was virtually alone. If we laugh less at him today, it is only because we are used to him now, times have changed and others are saying more fundamental things. Sahl created an audience for dissent, though by the same token, he helped edge other comics into more social attitudes. The great comics always move toward dissent; witness Chaplin's attack on our whole society in *Monsieur Verdoux* and W. C. Field's complete satire on the Rose-covered Cottage and the American Virtues in *The Bank Dick*.

But oddly—or perhaps not so oddly—it all escaped the notice of those commentators on our culture who occasionally dim the pages of the once-vigorous journals and keep desperately trying to crawl back to a point on the time track where their arguments had meaning and their voices could be heard.

"Satire scarcely exists," Gore Vidal lamented in "The Unrocked Boat" (*The Nation*, April 26, 1958) two short years ago. "If one can make the cautious laugh by clowning, half the work is done, for laughing is the satirist's anaesthetic; he can then make his incision, darting on before the audience knows what has been done to it. But he must be swift and engaging or the laughter will turn to indifferent silence, the ultimate censorship . . ."

When Mr. Vidal asked rhetorically "where can the American satirist operate today?" and answered "not on television, seldom if ever in the movies, and on the stage only if he is willing to play the buffoon" he was dead right. But, like the rest of the adult intellectuals in this country, spokesman for what Colin MacInnes' brilliantly hopeful teen-ager in "Absolute Beginners" call "the conscripts", he has abandoned the off-shoot of the night club (jazz club) and the whole jazz culture to the youngsters, the jazz fans and the hipsters. He thus sidestepped the greatest cultural force in society today, the negro, jazz-fan world of disaffiliation. The unrocked boat is simply the one Mr. Vidal caught. He missed the

real one; it left before he got there.

For out of the jungle, half-world of the jazz culture has come the humor of immediate and total dissent. It is no accident that the new comedy uses the language of jazz: As the South African journalist and jazz player Obed Vezi 'Musi said in a letter to this writer, "jazz . . . is the only international language today amongst non-Squares."

The European counterparts of the American liberals have not missed this boat. The Angry Young Men and the new forces in France, Germany and elsewhere know about the Fifth International of Jazz, as Lawrence Lipton, occasionally a brilliant social commentator if now the Alexander King of the Beatniks, has called it. In this country only Ginsberg, Kerouac, Rexroth and Ferlinghetti (to varying degrees) seem to have any suspicion of what jazz is about socially. And from *The Nation* to *The Atlantic* and from *The Partisan Review* to *The Kenyon Review*, when the critics have worried at all about the unrocked boat, they have failed to see an ocean liner being pitched and tossed magnificently; possibly because they are on it, zonked by nuclear hypnosis.

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best Northwest
book since
Honey in the Horn"**

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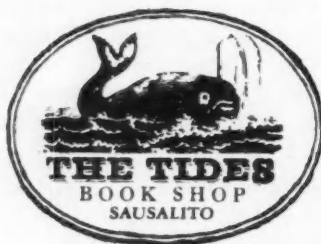
**TRASK
BY DON BERRY**

"Very few writers can evoke truly a time and a way of life that they have experienced only in imagination. Once in a long while this controlled dreaming, which makes real what never happened, creates a novel that can be called great. This is the kind of imagination that Don Berry has. At the age of 27, he has produced a book which I must call great The narrative begins quietly, gently, and increases in suspense until it has the power of an avalanche Here is all manner of conflict, and triumph of the most admirable kind The most exciting book I have read in years."

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It's no wonder the new voice comes from the world of jazz, the world of the young. "No one in the world under twenty is interested in that bomb of yours one little bit," Mr. MacInnes' disturbingly precocious teen-ager adds. "It's only you adult numbers who want to destroy one another."

The key to the future is integration and the minority role of the Caucasian, and jazz is that part of our culture where this has first become manifest, and the jazz people that portion of our society that has most freely and totally accepted this. And it is this acceptance of true integration on the part of the jazz world that has, in turn, caused the acceptance of the jazz world in Europe where, an ocean in space and a millenium in time removed from all deliberate speed, the reality behind the American Dream was first perceived.

The city fathers of Belmore, New Jersey were being logical when they tried to legislate against the jam session; its existence is the refutation of their whole reason for existence. The mass communications media and the San Francisco Police Department were being logical when they campaigned against the

Beatniks (that well-meaning but misguided group on the periphery of the jazz world). Likewise, the standard comedians like Joey Bishop and Joey Adams are correct in damning the total satire of the jazz comic, just as the captive poets in the universities are correct in damning Ginsberg. And the spokesmen for the vested interests, literary or otherwise, whether they be Diana Trilling in the *Partisan Review* or Abel Green in *Variety* are correct in adding their voices to the derisive chorus. All of the forces of status quo have reacted correctly and instinctively in self preservation.

If they didn't, they would be guilty of not having the guts to fight for their own lives.

The American satirist that Mr. Vidal is really seeking is Lenny Bruce, a slim, ex-sailor, who in the jazz clubs and the jazz-oriented clubs (and on a series of long-playing phonograph records) attacks the full spectrum of our society, stamping on all the taboos, all the stereotypes and all the traditionally sacred cows. His answer to the tranquilizer of stage, TV and movie humor ("a funny thing happened to me on the way to the club tonight") is the shock therapy of total satire in which

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An illustration of an elephant and a bear standing on a grassy field with clouds in the background. The elephant is on the left, holding a banner with its trunk. The bear is on the right, also holding the banner. The banner contains text about the San Francisco Chronicle.

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which nothing—art, politics, human relations, religion, sex, age, and color—is sacred and all is viewed from the jazz musicians' point of view of colossal irreverence—the nuclear age equivalent of "show me."

"A 70 year old man can't do *anything*. Let's face it, he's got prostate trouble," Bruce says in discussing the White House inaction in the lunch counter sit-down strikes. "When are you coming to the Coast?" he has the revival preacher ask Pope John in his Religions, Inc. routine, "I can get you the Sullivan show on the 19th. Just wave and wear the big ring."

Bruce is considered in the trade a "far out" comedian. Far out, of course, depends on where you stand and from where Bruce stands the atom bomb, hypocrisy, greed, religious, and social intolerance are all ridiculous. He makes us see this, more clearly perhaps than anyone of his generation, by the simple device of extending them to absurdity and by making us laugh as he discusses them in the context of show business tinsel and greasepaint terms. For isn't it, after all, he seems to say, a Barnum and Bailey world? Just as phony as it can be? But it wouldn't be make-believe, he infers, if you believed in me and I in you and each in his brothers. *Then* there would be no paper moon hanging over a cardboard tree, but instead a real and sane and adult world with a real, live, unradio-active moon with no ersatz brothers peeking down from orbit. Do we hear Melville's confidence man saying again "Oh good ge'm-men have you no confidence in dis poor ole Darkie?"

With Shaw's concept that if you wish to tell people the truth you must first make them laugh, holding him like a safety-belt in a hot rod, Bruce burns rubber as he sheers across our safety zones. "I'm not sick," he says indignantly when labelled as a sick comedian. "It's our society that's sick."

As an illustration of this point of view, take his commentary on the motion picture *The Esther Costello Story*. Bruce graphically describes the final seduction scene wherein the deaf and blind girl regains her sight and hearing after the shock of being raped. "What's the moral?" Bruce asks. What, indeed?

In his Religions, Inc. satire (which in night clubs he prefaces by the startling observation that today the religious advertising in newspapers on the weekend is of greater volume than the

entertainment advertising) Bruce has the leading evangelist character say "This year we've got a tie-in with Oldsmobile. Now I don't ask you to hard-sell Oldsmobile from the pulpit. Just zing it in there now and then . . . DRIVE THE CAR HE DRIVES!"

This opening bit frequently causes gasps of horror from the expense-account crowd in a club like San Francisco's hungry i or New York's Blue Angel. Yet consider these extracts from a press release issued March 17, 1960 by David O. Alber Associates, 44 East 53rd Street, New York.

"The Ask Mr. Foster Travel Service received word (sic) from their representative in Rome that a group travelling under their direction presented Pope John XXIII with a \$12,000 Cadillac limousine.

"Reportedly Pope John told the group at the presentation 'We'll meet again at the gates of Paradise. I bless this car and also all of your cars—I assume you all have cars.' He continued 'A Benediction to all of you, with or without cars.'"

. . . End of press release

Bruce's imaginative scene of a convention of "the religious leaders of our country" on Madison Avenue presents more dialogue putting religion into the same frame of reference as salesmanship, business, and entertainment. Yet those who condemn it as bad taste might be shocked to learn that Cardinal Spellman was photographed, and the picture used in trade paper advertising, with the head of a record company that has figured prominently in the New York District Attorney's investigation of payola. The occasion was the signing of the Boys' Choir from St. Patrick's Cathedral to make recordings. Earl Wilson, the night club columnist, later reported that a leading target of the D.A.'s investigation had a photograph displayed prominently on the wall showing him with a famous prelate.

Again, when the Mormon Tabernacle Choir recorded "Battle Hymn of the Republic" a Columbia Records promotion man told this writer that the head of the Mormon Church was sending out an appeal to all his church's members urging them to buy the record, hence it was certain to be a hit ("you know there are 1,400,000 Mormons.")

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And in Marin County, California, in the fall of 1959, a minister resigned his post to join a mutual fund company saying "I feel I have been called into business as I was called into the Church."

It takes the colossal irreverence of jazz, the cynicism bred of a walk on the wild side and the simple love of truth that flourishes in children, saints, and artists to see this sort of thing in the right light. And the real joke, as Shaw pointed out, is to be in earnest when you're being funny.

Other night club comedians have become increasingly sharp in their satire in the past few years as the climate encouraged it. Mike Nichols and Elaine May, Mort Sahl, and Jonathan Winters immediately come to mind. But the scope and depth of their observations are not the equal of Bruce. Mike and Elaine for instance, limit themselves to casual family and social situations, adultery, the PTA, teenagers "making out" in a car, a neurotic son and a psychopathic mother. Familiar situations with all the voltage of a *New Yorker* cartoon. Mort Sahl, equally as successful as Bruce in terms of box office (It is possible for one of these satirists to make upwards of \$4000 a week in night clubs and to have albums on the best seller lists. What price conformity?) limits himself to political questions, razorsharp commentary on the language and mores of specialized groups (psychiatrists, hi-fi fans, sports car collectors etc.) and might equate roughly with the level of *The Reporter*.

Bruce goes all the way to total satire, challenging the whole of our culture; racial prejudice, the get-rich-quick syndrome that has produced payola and vicuña coats and all the hypocrisy that surrounds us. He becomes a verbal Hieronymous Bosch, the same urgency in his monologues as exists in a solo by Charlie Parker or a line by Dylan Thomas.

"I don't think of myself as a sick comic. Like 'beatnik' it's just a label. I've always been a rebel and I'm still a rebel," he told an interviewer. "Would you say Lou Costello was a sick comic? For years he told a story about a man whose wife died. She said on her deathbed that if he ever married again, she'd dig her way out of the grave. So the man said 'I buried her face down; let her dig!' Take that one apart. There's nothing sicker. I'm a moralist, I don't object to the sins of today. I just object to the people who don't admit their sins."

"I've been accused of bad taste and I'll go down to my grave accused of it and always by the same people—the ones who eat in restaurants that reserve the right to refuse service to anyone!"

For instance, at one point in his career Bruce had a long routine in which he told of his experiences on the Steve Allen show. When he came home from the Navy he would say, his aunt discovered he had a tattoo on his arm and cried out ("like a Jewish seagull, eeeeehk! eeeeehk!") that he couldn't be buried in a Jewish cemetery with a tattoo. Something about going out the way you come in, he would say and add parenthetically that this concept seemed to conflict with circumcision. His reply to his Aunt was that he would have the arm cut off after he was dead and bury it in a Gentile cemetery and the rest of him in an Orthodox one. The NBC censors deleted this bit right away. First on the grounds that the Jewish people would be offended and then on the grounds that it would offend the Gentiles ("You're saying they don't care WHAT they bury").

Bruce has appeared only twice on a national TV show, it seems unnecessary to point out, a victim of the censors who, he says,

*

CONTACT

is proud to announce that it has received two LONGVIEW FOUNDATION awards during its first year of publication.

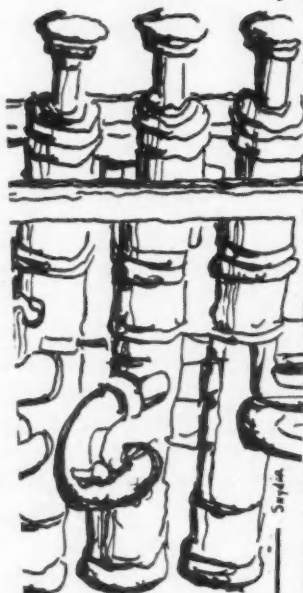
One for Donald Hall's poem, *Little Red Riding Hood* in CONTACT 2 and one for C. Wright Mills' article,

The Decline of the Left
in

CONTACT 3

*

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always think that "in New York they'll dig it, but in Davenport, Iowa? They're always worrying about Davenport, Iowa or Fayetteville, Arkansas. And little do they realize that 'they' are no longer 'they.' They're pretty hip in Davenport, Iowa and the people who are really geniuses, the Hidden Persuaders, the Vance Packards, realize this and the greatest proof is that the large cigarette companies don't advertise differently for Davenport, Iowa or Montauk, Long Island. They would immediately, if they felt they were different."

Bruce's attacks on segregation range all the way from a dialogue such as the following to even more shocking sequences.

"We find the Governor talking to his daughter," Bruce introduces one skit.

"Well, Daddy, I've got a wonderful surprise for you," she says.

"Well, what is it, Belle of the South," the Governor asks.

"Well, Daddy, your daughter Sheilah Joy's going to get married."

"Well, married (pause) that sort of brings a warm spot to my old Southern heart. I can't believe you're such a big girl, Sheilah Joy. Are you marrying a local boy?"

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Like Peck Kelly of Texas, and Joe Abernathy of New York, Buck Hammer has become a legendary figure, although to what extent the event of his untimely death contributed to the current wave of interest in him it would be at the present time hard to say. We must be wary, of course, in overpraising Hammer, or expecting too much of him. On the other hand, we must savor the contents of this album very carefully for this collection is all we have heard of Buck, or all we shall ever hear. Peck Kelly would not record at all, and eventually would not play at all. Abernathy refused to record for long periods of time but fortunately was induced to take part in several commercial sessions on a few occasions. Buck Hammer for many years refused all offers that would have involved his leaving Glen Springs, Alabama, and when he finally consented to visit Nashville, in the winter of 1956, to record these few sides he did so with no particular enthusiasm but as the result of a promise made to his brother Martin in an off-guard moment. Available monophonic (M8001) and stereo (S8001).

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San Francisco Examiner

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S CIRCULATION LEADER

"No, daddy, he's a New York stage actor. Mama and I met him last summer in Long Island."

"Well, I've never had much truck with stage folks, but I'm sure if my daughter Sheila Joy picked him out he's a fine upstanding man. What's his name, Sugar?"

"Harry Belafonte."

"Hmmm. An Italian boy, eh? Well, that's wonderful, Sheila Joy."

The Bruce satirical performance has more in common with the jazz musician than point of view. Like the jazz musician, he improvises a good deal of his material. It is, of course, based in outline on set material, just as the jazz solo is based on a pre-set series of chords, a time signal and bar structure. And like the jazz solo, because it is improvised, it can be, on the same night in different shows, very good or very bad. But when he is "cooking" in the jazz musician's term—meaning he is working at top level of performance in a strong bond with the audience—Bruce can stop and deliver a five minute lecture on integration and make the audience listen. "The people in the South *know* they're wrong," he'll say "if you're a Christian or a Jew, and you believe in the Bible and its principles, you cannot really call yourself a good Christian or a good Jew and not wholeheartedly believe in integration. Because I know that Christ or Moses would never tell a child that he couldn't go to school. He could never, *ever* say to a child that 'You can't drink out of that fountain. That's a white fountain.'"

The jazz musician's attitude towards integration is succinctly stated in the title of a composition by one of their sacred Trinity of Dead Saints (Charlie 'Bird' Parker, Lester 'Pres' Young, and Billie 'Lady Day' Holiday). Parker wrote a blues some years ago to which Jon Hendricks, a latter day jazz preacher and poet wrote lyrics. It is an indictment, implied and rather explicit, and it's called "*Now's the Time*."

Impatience and irreverence. These are the emotions which motivate a Lenny Bruce. Add to it an almost Biblical simplicity of belief in beauty, love, and truth and a sense of outrage at the obvious insanity that surrounds us, and you have the attitude of the jazz world and of Lenny Bruce. It's the world of Holden Caulfield with a new dimension—race and integration.

And it is no longer a cool world either. The position has changed, the wind has shifted, a Santa Aña has swept in and



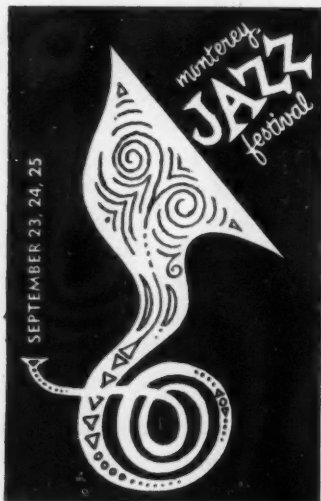
IN MARIN

ERRORS IN CONTACT 4

page 26, line 2: *Strange*
should read *strong*.

page 28, line 2 should read:

*The first revolt, orb's lap
betrayed to urb.*



altered everything. A few years ago Movement, the tea peddler in Bernard Wolfe's "The Late Risers" could say "Don't be fooled. I'm really not cool. I just don't know what else to be." Like jazz music itself, the world today *knows*. It has gotten hotter, warmed up by the blast from Africa that is rattling windows in Johannesburg, in Algiers, in Panama City, in Korea, yes, and in Biloxi and Berkeley, too.

This is the age of integration, the age of human beings wanting to be treated exactly like that, no more and no less. Go to the deliberately inter-racial cocktail party and then hear Lenny Bruce's routine on How to Make Your Colored Friends Feel at Home. Bruce opens it with a white man trying to be friendly to a negro, and all the social attitudes, the hereditary condescension and traditional thinking that has made Richard Wright scream "White Man, Listen!" is wrapped up in his opening line. The white approaches the negro, puts his arm around his shoulder, clears his throat and says "Saaaaay, that Joe Louis is a hellova fighter."

The negro and the white in the audience will both laugh.

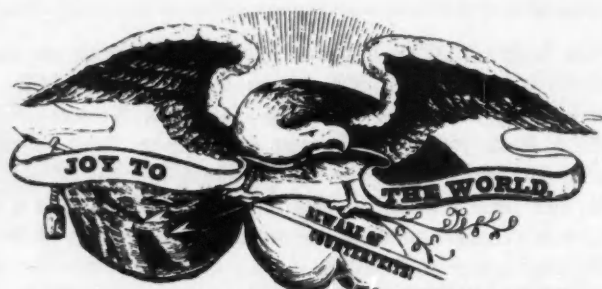
But the laughter of the latter is rarer. It's hard to see ourselves as others see us and it's even harder to laugh about it.

As jazz was a dissent from the classicism, Kerouac, Rexroth, Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti and the rest are a dissent from the Madison Avenue of literature, on the road perhaps in a world they never made, but, what is more important, *on the move*. And it is all part of the same thing—the total dissent including the wit of Bruce.

Comedy, satire and humor in this country—from the time of Mark Twain on down—has been characterized by the wisecrack, the quip and the switch on the old joke. The Depression gave it guts enough once to become really socially useful as satire. The Moral Depression of the Nuclear Age is doing the same again. We may not like what Lenny Bruce says—and no comedian in memory has had as rough a time at the hands of the critics and even the entertainment trade press. He will step on your own personal taboo inevitably, but if you can stop screaming long enough to think about what he says, we may all end up by laughing and with the laughter, move things forward a bit.

Ralph J. Gleason was born in New York, went to Columbia and since 1950 has been a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. His jazz column is syndicated in over 20 newspapers in the U.S., Sweden, New Zealand and Canada and he is editor of the quarterly, *Jazz*.





RELIEF for the **DISTRESSED** and **BALM** for the **WOUNDED** is found in

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SPECIAL ISSUE

In a human society growing in size and complexity with terrifying speed, feeding on Truth and Hope and Order like Fenrir the dreadful wolf whose upper jaw rubbed the sky and whose lower jaw scraped the trembling earth, who fed on the bodies of men, who, on the dark cold day of Götterdämmerung, ate the Gods; in a society of humans which only machines can comprehend, lonesome men and women, more and more and one by one, are being deprived of the salvation of belief, the salvation of allegiance to themselves and to society, itself, their own creation; in such a place, in such a time, in such a life, guilt—born of ignorance and confusion and false horizons—flourishes in the wolf's hairy shadow as, in the old days, it flourished in the terrible face of God. Guilt flourishes and Crime increases. Who is not a criminal? Who does not suffer guilt from sources unknown, from crimes uncommitted? Who has not said to himself when a police car passes proclaiming its pursuit with a screaming siren; who, then, has not said:

"Is it me they're after? What have I done?"

THE CRIMINAL MAN



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